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FAME AND FORTUNE

WEEKLY

STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY.

A YOUNG MONTE CRISTO; OR, THE RICHEST BOY IN THE WORLD.

By A SELF-MADE MAN.



At that moment they were startled by the report of a gun close by. Then came a crashing sound among the bushes and a boy of fifteen, followed by two burly negroes, burst into sight and came running toward the wreck.

Fame and Fortune Weekly

STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY

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A YOUNG MONTE CRISTO;

OR,

THE RICHEST BOY IN THE WORLD.

By A SELF-MADE MAN.

CHAPTER I.

THE DISADVANTAGES OF HAVING A STEP-FATHER.

"I tell you what it is, Dick, I won't put up with this sort of thing much longer," exclaimed Will Newton, a good-looking, stalwart boy of fifteen, to his chum, Dick Bumstead, one year his junior. "Mr. Bacon is going a little too far."

The speaker's eyes flashed resolutely, his cheeks were flushed, and his voice trembled with indignation.

"What's your step-father been doing to you now?" asked Dick, curiously, in a tone that was clearly sympathetic.

"What's he always doing but trying to make life miserable for me?"

"In what particular way this time?"

"His son Moses had the cheek to take my pony out of the stable this morning, without saying a word to me of his intention, and ride him half to death. When he brought Dandy back I gave him a dressing down, for I have warned him not to take my horse without my permission. He rushed into the house and told his father that I had half-killed him, and Mr. Bacon came out to the stable in a great rage, and, after talking to me like a Dutch uncle, gave me to understand that Moses had the same right to use the

pony as I had, and that if I interfered with that right he would make things unpleasant for me in a way I wouldn't like."

"But the pony is yours, isn't he?" said Dick.

"He is. My father gave him to me a few months before he died, as a birthday gift, and Moses has no right at all to use him unless I say so."

"What are you going to do about it, Will?"

"I'm going to resist. I told Mr. Bacon that he had no business to interfere with my rights to Dandy, and that I wouldn't stand for it. If Moses treated the animal decently I wouldn't object to his using him occasionally, but he seems to take a delight in abusing the pony, just to make me mad."

"He's a mean little rascal," replied Dick Bumstead. "I've never liked him for a cent, nor do any of the boys in the neighborhood. He acts as if he were the whole thing around here, and you were a mere side issue. Whereas, all this property will belong to you when you become twenty-one."

"I guess that's what troubles Mr. Bacon," said Will, his face relaxing into a slight grin. "I wouldn't be surprised that the reason why he married mother was because he thought the property had been left to her. In that case he

could manage it without being expected to give an accounting."

"If he did he got beautifully left, didn't he?" laughed Dick.

"That's what he did. Mother is my legal guardian, but the trouble is she allows Mr. Bacon to do as he chooses. However, there's one thing he can't do, and that is to do me out of my rights. Even mother can't sell this property at any price. It's got to remain as it is until I come at age, when she must turn it over to me."

"Suppose you should happen to die, Will, before you reached twenty-one, what then?"

"In that case it would become mother's absolutely, to dispose of as she thought fit."

"Which means that your step-father would then get control of it in the way that would suit him best."

"I'm afraid so. However, I'm pretty healthy, and I don't think Mr. Bacon's chances of getting hold of it that way are very good."

"I hope not. I should hate to have anything happen to you, Will. Why, Moses would put on more airs than ever if he thought he was going to come into this place in the long run."

"I'll bet he would. He's sly and soft-spoken to mother, just like his father. Makes her think butter wouldn't melt in his mouth. He makes me sick."

"How came your mother to marry Mr. Bacon, anyway?"

"He's an old friend of hers. She knew him long before she met my father. He was living in New York when father died. He had just lost his own wife, and when he heard of mother's loss he wrote her a sympathetic letter. Then she didn't hear from him for nearly a year, for he went out West to look after some mining property in which he had invested most of the money he got from his wife. He had no use for mother then, as he expected to make all kinds of money out in Nevada. However, the mine turned out a failure, and he lost all he had. Then I guess it occurred to him that if he could marry mother he could get on his feet again. So he came down here, opened a law office in the village and began to call on us regularly."

"And in a year he did marry your mother. If he really married her for what father calls mercenary purposes it's a wonder that he didn't find out all about the provisions of your father's will before he committed himself."

"He took things for granted, I guess, for I won't deny but he really does seem to think a lot of mother. That's the only thing that reconciles me to his presence here—he treats her all right; but he does put it all over me. If he treated me decent, and Moses was the right kind of a boy, things would run along all right."

"He certainly acts toward you as if he owed you a grudge," said Dick.

"I don't see what he gains by it. Before he married mother he couldn't do enough for me, and I had begun to like him. But soon after he came here to live, with Moses, he changed around. I began to come in for the short end of everything, while Moses got all the fat. Of course, I

kicked to mother about it, and I suppose she talked to Mr. Bacon, but things only got worse instead of better. While I get fifty cents a week pocket money, Moses gets a dollar. The spare chamber was fitted up for him in a style that makes my room look like thirty cents beside it. When he wants to go anywhere he goes. When I start to do likewise, Mr. Bacon has some excuse for preventing me, though he does not always succeed."

"I'm glad I haven't a step-father," said Dick Bumstead, nodding his head, vigorously.

"You may thank your stars that you haven't."

"If I had one like Mr. Bacon I'd either have it out with him or run away."

"I'm not going to be so foolish as to run away. That would be biting my nose off to spite my face. I'm going to stick up for my rights from this out, you can bet your sweet life. If Moses touches Dandy again I'll polish him off worse than I did this morning."

"Suppose Mr. Bacon should punish you for doing so, what could you do?"

"I'd do something he wouldn't like. I'm no chicken."

"If I were you I'd talk the matter over with your mother. There's no use of you getting into a racket with your step-father if you can avoid it."

"I'm not looking for trouble," said Will; "but I've reached the limit of my patience. If Mr. Bacon and I have a run-in together it will be his fault."

"By the way, Will, I was down at the creek this morning, and what do you suppose I saw there?"

"Water," grinned Will Newton. "You didn't catch me that time."

"I wasn't trying to catch you. Of course I saw water—lots of it, but I also saw something else. It was a large brig lying at anchor there. Must have come in during the night, for she wasn't there yesterday afternoon when we were down there."

"A large brig lying at anchor in the creek!" ejaculated Will, in surprise.

"Yes."

"That's rather unusual. I never heard of a big craft putting in there before."

"Nor I, either."

"There hasn't been any storm that would cause her to seek shelter in that lonesome spot. The mouth of the creek is not visible from the ocean, anyway. No stranger would be able to tell there was a creek in this vicinity. I wonder what she's doing there?"

"Give it up. She seemed to be just lying there."

"I'd like to go down and take a look at her," said Will.

"All right. I'll go with you," replied Dick Bumstead.

The two boys, who had been standing close to the thick hedge which divided the garden from the orchard, of a well-kept country home in New Jersey, not very far from the ocean, started for the rustic gate which communicated with a lane leading to a broad expanse of meadow-land that terminated in that direction with the shore.

Hardly had they left the spot when the head and shoul-

ders of a handsome man of perhaps forty-five was thrust over the hedge, behind which he had been crouching for some time, and his eyes followed the two boys till they passed through the gate.

"So, Master Will, you intend to ride the high horse with me, do you?" and a disagreeable smile curled the corners of his lips. "You forget that when I wedded your mother I became master of your actions. You think that I married your mother for her property, and that I got beautifully left, eh? It is a satisfaction for you to feel that it is quite out of my power to do you out of this estate willed to you by your father. We shall see, Master Will, we shall see. You are a long way from your majority yet, my fine lad, and many things may happen before six years roll by. Oh, yes; no one is sure of anything in this world. However, it is the long head that wins, and I flatter myself that I can handle both you and your property. You don't like my son, Moses. You think that one of these days Moses will be a comparative pauper, a pensioner on your bounty, when you are rolling in your patrimony. Perhaps you'll find out that the boot will be on the other leg. Moses's little finger is more to me than your whole body. You've tried to queer Moses with your mother, but I don't think you've succeeded very well. My influence with her is stronger than yours, Master Newton—much stronger. I can wind her around my fingers, for her will is as weak as water. At any rate, she believes I live only to please her, and she appreciates my regard for her. Why shouldn't she? If you were out of the way for good, Master Will, this property would revert to your mother. And if anything happened to her it would naturally come to me, her husband, and then my son, Moses, would be far from the pauper he now appears to be. But I should not wish anything to happen to her for many a day yet. With you removed the property would be practically in my control without the disagreeable prospect ahead of having to render to any court an account of my management as exists at present. Moses can wait. He's young. He could enjoy all the advantages in the meantime of a property which would then eventually be his. I'm thinking, Master Will, now that you mean to kick in your traces, that it is time to smother you in the bud. Yes, yes, it is high time I attended to your case."

Mr. Ralph Bacon turned round and walked to the gate which communicated with the garden, passed through and took the graveled path leading to the front veranda.

As he approached the house a tall, bearded, sun-burned stranger appeared at the road gate, entered the grounds and strode up to the house.

Mr. Bacon observed him as he came up the driveway, and, curious to know what he wanted, waited for him to reach the porch.

As he drew near, the lawyer thought there was something familiar about him.

"Are you the——" began the stranger. Then he stopped and stared. "Why, you are Lawyer Bacon, are you not?"

"My name is Bacon, Ralph Bacon, and I am a lawyer, sir. May I ask your name?"

"My name is Peter Finley. I think we have met before."

CHAPTER II.

A VILLAINOUS BARGAIN.

"Captain Peter Finley, of the brig Lone Star?" said Mr. Bacon, in some surprise.

"You've got it right, Mr. Bacon," chuckled the skipper, thrusting his mahogany-hued hands into his trouser's pockets.

"You are the man I believe who called on me to help straighten out a little tangle with the Government?"

"Precisely. You straightened it out all right, and I paid you well for your services. Is this your country residence?"

Mr. Bacon nodded.

"A handsome place, upon my word," replied Captain Finley, looking about him. "I wouldn't mind owning such a place myself. Perhaps I will after one or two more trips to the coast of Cuba."

"Do you mean to say that after getting out of that other mess you've mixed yourself up in——"

"Another? Well, Mr. Bacon," said the captain, with a wink, "you know there's a heap of money in the filibustering business. The Cubans need the stuff and have got the money to pay for it. They can buy it in this country easily enough. The trouble is to get it out of the country without being detected."

"I should say so. I suppose you know that you are a marked man ever since your last scrape. How can you hope to hoodwink the Secret Service men, who, no doubt, are watching every move you make?"

"It is one of the advantages of genius to overcome obstacles," grinned Captain Finley.

Lawyer Bacon shook his head, deprecatingly.

"You have to be mighty slick to deceive the agents of this Government. They are under strict orders to let no contraband goods get outside the three-mile limit."

"I am fully aware of the risks I face, Mr. Bacon, and so is Juan Balmaceda, the Cuban agent; but just the same we both expect to run a full cargo of arms and ammunition away from these shores to-night."

"Well, it's none of my business whether you do or do not make the attempt you so confidently assert; but I may say that if you do I am not very sanguine of your success. You know what the Commissioner said when he discharged you after I had succeeded in showing the Government that it had no case against you—he was by no means convinced in his own mind that you were guiltless, and he warned you that if you were ever brought before him again on a similar charge, and it could be proved, he would give you the extreme limit of the law."

"I remember it well enough," chuckled the captain.

"Then let me say I think you are taking desperate chances——"

"For a remuneration that is proportionate to the risk involved."

"Well, you know your own business," replied the lawyer, shrugging his shoulders. "May I ask to what I am indebted for this visit?"

"Certainly, Mr. Bacon. I was not aware you were the owner of this property. My object in coming here was to obtain permission to use the lane running from the road through the orchard and meadows to the creek beyond."

"Use my lane! Pray, sir, for what purpose?"

"The Lone Star is at this moment anchored as far up the creek as she can go. Yesterday I cleared for Key West with a small miscellaneous cargo—not at all contraband, I may say, I'm no such fool, for the goods were watched and examined by Government agents who, as you have said, take a great interest in the movements of myself and my brig—and sailed with last night's flood. However, I didn't get any further than the creek yonder."

"And why should you put in at the creek? Did any accident happen to your vessel?"

Captain Finley looked intently for some moments at the lawyer before replying.

"Mr. Bacon, I'm thinking that I'll have to trust you. I am sure after our confidential relations in which your services were duly appreciated you will be willing to do me a favor without being too inquisitive as to the reasons involved. I expect a number of wagons will arrive in this neighborhood about midnight, the contents of which are to be transferred to the Lone Star. The only way they can reach the brig is through your lane. You need not know anything about the circumstance at all, and five \$20 bank-notes ought to make you sleep with a quiet conscience."

The captain took out his wallet and displayed a nice wad of money.

The lawyer received the proposition with some uneasiness.

"I think I understand the situation," he replied, pointedly. "You intend to take a cargo of contraband goods on board at the creek. A very pretty scheme, I must say, and I hardly approve of you making a cat's-paw of me—for that is what it amounts to. The news is bound to leak out some day, especially if the watchful Spaniards should happen to catch you off the Cuban coast, and then I shall be called upon for an explanation."

"You will be in no way involved," replied Captain Finley, persuasively. "Your lane might easily be used without your knowledge or consent. I have not said that the wagons I expect contain goods whose export to Cuba has been declared illegal. As you will probably be in bed and asleep by midnight, like all good country people, you will have no knowledge that any wagons whatever have passed down your lane. You will be able to swear to that fact with an easy conscience."

"And if I refuse my consent to this proposition of yours?" said the lawyer, watching the captain intently.

The skipper of the Lone Star shrugged his shoulders.

"You might do so as a matter of form," he said, with a

queer look. "In any case I shall ask you to accept the \$100 as a present and token of appreciation for your valuable legal assistance of the past," and the captain tendered the lawyer five brand-new bank-bills, which Mr. Bacon, with some reluctance, accepted and put in his pocket.

"Remember, Captain Finley, that if you use my lane to-night you do so without my consent. It will be a case of trespass, do you understand?"

"Certainly, Mr. Bacon, I understand," replied the skipper of the Lone Star, with a wink. "If any wagons pass down your lane to-night it will be against your wishes. Quite proper, sir, quite proper, indeed," and Captain Finley chuckled and rubbed his horny hands together as if he was pondering over an excellent joke.

As Mr. Bacon looked at the tall, bewhiskered stranger, whose character he had summed up months before, an idea suddenly struck him—an idea that seemed to round out a purpose he was already forming in his mind.

"Captain Finley, will you step inside and have a glass of wine with me in my library?" he said, in a friendly tone.

The captain regarded him a moment in surprise, and then said:

"Thank you, I will if you make it whiskey. Wine doesn't agree with my constitution."

"I can give you whiskey, or even gin, if you prefer that."

"Whiskey is good enough for me, Mr. Bacon," he replied, as he followed the lawyer up the steps into the house.

Mr. Bacon conducted him to his library, which was in the rear on the ground floor, and from the windows of which a distant view was to be had of the waters of the Atlantic, glistening in the afternoon sunshine.

The lawyer produced a decanter of whiskey and another of sherry, with glasses and a plate of fancy biscuits, from a wall-closet.

Captain Finley helped himself to a stiff glass of the whiskey, while Mr. Bacon poured out a glass of wine for himself.

"My regards," said the skipper, tossing the liquor off.

The lawyer nodded and sipped his wine.

"You have a fine place here," said Captain Finley, gazing around the elegantly furnished room. "You lawyers generally manage to live on the fat of the land."

"It is very comforting to know that one is not in danger of going to the poorhouse in one's old age," replied Mr. Bacon, complacently.

"That's true," replied the skipper. "I'm looking forward to the pleasures that an abundance of the coin of this republic will enable me to enjoy."

"I hope you will realize your desires, Captain Finley, but I'm afraid you are playing with fire."

"Oh," answered the skipper, with a shrug, "it's all in one's life. Many daily risk a fortune in Wall Street in order to gain another. The chances are all against them, I understand. Well, I'm risking my life and my liberty for what to me represents a fortune, with the chance, I take it, about even."

"If your vessel should happen to be taken by a Spanish

cruiser in Cuban water and contraband goods were found on board, or if you and your crew should be caught landing the stuff on the shore of that island, what would happen to you?"

"We should be imprisoned and probably shot," replied the skipper, coolly. "I depend on the swiftness of the brig to avoid the former, and upon the activity of the insurgents to provide against the latter."

"How would you like to take a recruit?"

"A recruit! What do you mean?" asked Captain Finley, looking hard at the imperturbable countenance of the lawyer.

"I should like to have my step-son see a little of the world."

"Your step-son!" exclaimed the skipper, raising his eyebrows.

"My step-son. He is getting a little beyond my control. I think a voyage in the Lone Star to the coast of Cuba would do him a world of good."

"How old is this young man?"

"Fifteen years."

"Do you thoroughly understand the risk he would have to face on such a trip?" replied the skipper, in some astonishment.

"I think I do," answered Mr. Bacon, calmly.

"Does he understand it himself, and is anxious to go?"

"That has nothing to do with the matter."

"Oh, it hasn't!" said the captain, drawing a long breath and studying the features of his host, critically.

"Let us understand each other," said the lawyer, coming right to the point. "You have trusted me with the object of the Lone Star's presence in the creek, if not in so many words, at least I can see through a millstone when there's a hole in it. At any rate you know I have my suspicions. Now, Captain Finley, I think I can be just as frank with you. My step-son is in my way. If you would take him over to Cuba and anything happened to him there it would not greatly distress me, do you understand?"

"I think I do," grunted the skipper.

"If the Spaniards caught him under suspicious circumstances it would relieve me of a certain responsibility his presence here occasions me. If you wish to undertake such a commission, Captain Finley, I will make it greatly to your advantage—your pecuniary advantage."

"You might set a figure on this business, Mr. Bacon. It would be more business-like, and I should know what I can depend on. How much is this little job worth to you?"

"If you will undertake to insure that this boy will never return to annoy me again I will guarantee to pay you the sum of \$5,000."

"When?"

"On presentation of proof of his death that will stand in court."

"I'll do it, Mr. Bacon, if you will give me a paper in writing to that effect."

"Such a paper would be too dangerous for me to sign.

Supposing anything happened to you and that document were to come to light, look at the position I would be in."

"I must have some guarantee that you mean business," said the skipper.

"Suppose I also were to ask you to furnish a guarantee that you would carry out the terms of this agreement, could you furnish it?"

"I'm afraid not."

"Well, you see, we'll have to trust each other to a certain extent."

"Well, give me \$1,000 down, and I'll go into the scheme—the balance to be paid as soon as I furnish you the evidence you require."

The lawyer agreed to this arrangement, and then the pair put their heads together to consider the best way Will Newton could be spirited on board the Lone Star without any one else being the wiser of the fact.

CHAPTER III.

THE TALL MAN WITH THE BLACK WHISKERS.

That evening at supper Mr. Bacon was unusually gracious to his step-son.

Will couldn't help noticing the change, and wondered what had come over Mr. Bacon.

Moses also observed, with a feeling of displeasure, his father's apparent change of front.

A short time after the meal, Mr. Bacon asked Will if he would go to the village on an errand.

"Yes, sir," replied the boy, cheerfully. "What is it you want me to get for you?"

The lawyer wanted some writing-paper and a few other things.

Will put on his hat and started for the village on foot.

He had about half a mile to go before he struck the head of Main Street, and another half mile before he reached the heart of the business section where the stationery and drug store stood.

The stillness of the night and the solitude of the road did not bother Will any, but he concluded to stop at the Bumstead home and get Dick to go along with him.

Dick was reading a story-book when his friend called.

He immediately agreed to walk to the village and back with Will.

"I was telling father at supper about that brig that is anchored in the creek," said Dick.

"What did he say about her?"

"He thought it was kind of singular for her to put in there, unless she had met with some serious damage and hauled in to make repairs."

"I didn't notice that there was anything the matter with her, did you?"

"No," replied Dick, shaking his head. "She seemed to be all right."

"At any rate, as far as we could see the crew were not doing anything to her."

"I saw several of them lying asleep in the bushes," said Dick.

"I saw them, too. Rather hard-looking chaps. If I was anxious to go to sea I wouldn't want to ship with such chaps for associates."

"I should say not. I rather enjoy reading sea stories, but none of the real thing for me. I've heard that it's a dog's life."

"You didn't notice the vessel's name, did you, Dick?"

"No. A piece of sail hung over the stern, where the name is usually painted, and hid it."

"Craft of her size also have their name in raised, gilt letters at the bows. I looked there for it, but the end of a sail was hanging over from the forecastle and covered it up."

"If they had tried to keep the name hidden on purpose they couldn't have adopted better means for doing it; but, of course, there could be no reason for such a thing as that."

"I should think not. Suppose we go down in the morning and take another look at her?"

"I'm willing," replied Dick.

Their conversation turned into a different channel—about the prospects of their baseball team beating the nine of the nearby railroad town—and in a short time they reached the village drug store where stationery and cigars were also kept for sale.

Will made his purchases and when they left the store the boys almost ran into a tall, dark-complexioned man, whose face was plentifully covered with black whiskers.

"Hello, my lads! where bound in such a hurry?" he asked, looking keenly into their faces.

"Home," answered Will, shortly.

He saw the man was a stranger in the neighborhood, and he didn't see why he should address them so familiarly.

"Live in the village?" he queried, detaining Will with a grasp on his jacket sleeve.

"No, sir. We live down the road, in the suburbs," he replied, politely, but a bit impatiently.

"Down the road, eh? Perhaps you boys wouldn't object to me going along with you. I'm rather out of my bearings in this locality. I belong to a brig that's anchored in a creek somewhere along shore. Perhaps you could pilot me to the neighborhood?"

"Sure we could," spoke up Dick, unsuspectingly. "All you'll have to do is to go down a lane alongside my friend's apple orchard, and it will land you right at the head of the creek where your vessel is. We were down there this afternoon looking at her."

"You were down looking at her, eh?" replied the man with the whiskers. "Well, what did you think of her?"

"I'm no judge of vessels," replied Dick.

"I s'pose you wondered what she was doing there?" the stranger said, looking hard at Bumstead.

"Yes. This is the first time I can remember that a vessel of her size ever put in there."

"Well, you see we run foul of a steamer in the dark and damaged our steering gear badly," replied the man, with a

chuckle, "and hauled into the creek to repair it. Now we have to wait for the next flood tide to get out again."

The boys accepted this explanation as the reason for the brig's presence in the creek, and then became interested in a glowing yarn that the stranger reeled off about the many dangers he had encountered on the briny deep.

The man kept up a ceaseless flow of talk as they plodded along the road.

At length they reached Dick's home, which was only a short distance from Will's.

"Do you see that white gate yonder?" said Dick to the stranger.

The man nodded.

"That's the entrance to the lane. Keep right down it and you'll come to the creek."

"That's where you live I s'pose?" said the mariner to Will, pointing to the roof of a house which appeared above the trees.

"Yes, sir," replied the boy.

The stranger hesitated a moment, as if he expected Will would accompany him the rest of the way, but as he made no move to go on, the man finally wished them both good night and walked slowly toward the white gate to which he had been referred.

They saw him open the gate, pass through and then lost sight of him.

Ten minutes later Will parted from Dick Bumstead.

They had arranged to meet in the morning after breakfast.

Neither dreamed that it would be many years before they met again, and that Will was fated to pass through a terrible and singular experience which would work a great change in his life.

CHAPTER IV.

KIDNAPPED.

As Will approached the white gate, whistling one of the popular airs of the day, a pair of piercing black eyes watched his every move.

The boy glanced down the lane, but the mariner had apparently disappeared.

Suddenly, as he passed the gate, something descended upon his head.

A hand with a big stick had been thrust over the gate, and Will saw a myriad of red and white stars, felt an excruciating pain in his brain, and then pitched forward, unconscious, upon the side of the road.

The arm and stick were withdrawn, the gate was cautiously opened and the figure of the tall mariner with the bushy whiskers stepped up beside the boy and looked down at him.

"I guess that clip has settled his hash for a little while," said the man, who was no other than Captain Peter Finley, of the brig Lone Star.

Glancing up and down the road and making sure there was no one in sight, the skipper grasped the senseless boy

around the waist with one of his muscular arms, raised him from the ground with little apparent exertion, and, passing through the gate again, took his way down the lane.

In this way he reached the creek and continued on till he came to the vessel, which was now drawn close up to the bank.

"Is that you, cap'n?" asked a man who sprang out of the bushes in front of him.

"Aye, aye, Ford. I see you are keeping your weather eye lifting for stragglers."

"That's your orders, sir," looking curiously at the burden the captain carried.

"I've a stout boy here who is going to take a trip to the coast of Cuba," said the skipper, with a laugh. "Something fell on his head in the road and I had to carry him the rest of the way. I'll take him aboard, and to-morrow, when we're in blue water, you can teach him his duty."

Thus speaking, Captain Finley walked up the gangplank and disappeared over the brig's side.

Ford fell back among the bushes, and once more the stillness of the creek remained unbroken.

The sky was almost clear of clouds, and, though the moon was not yet risen, the stars sparkled brightly through the air and shone up again from the surface of the creek below.

Out by the mouth of the inlet there came the ceaseless ripple and surge of the incoming tide, and by and by a faint sound arose around that sequestered spot as the breeze from the ocean outside swept through the trees and the rigging of the silent craft at anchor.

Two hours crept away when a horseman suddenly appeared coming toward the brig.

A signal issued between his lips and instantly the chief mate, Ford, confronted him.

"That you, senor?" he asked, in a confident tone.

"Balmaceda," replied the horseman.

"Good. I suppose the wagons are coming now."

"They are already in the lane," replied the newcomer.

"I will call Captain Finley, then," replied the mate, hastening up the gangway.

The captain soon appeared and entered into a brief conversation with the stranger, after which the horseman turned his animal around and disappeared slowly in the direction he had come.

In the meantime the mate was arousing the crew, which soon swarmed on deck, a portion coming ashore.

The main hatchway was opened, a hoist and sling rigged, and everything appeared to be ready for business by the time the first of a train of loaded wagons came into sight.

The cargo with which the brig had left New York was battened down in the lower hold, leaving the space between decks to receive the contraband cases and kegs the wagons had brought from the railroad in the neighboring town, eight miles away, where they had loaded up that afternoon.

The scene of activity which now ensued, under the glare of a dozen lanterns, was in strange contrast to the quiet

and gloom which had hitherto prevailed along the creek.

There were no laggards in that crowd.

Captain Finley and his mates directed operations and issued low-spoken orders from time to time, while Juan Balmaceda, the Cuban agent, sat in his saddle a short distance away and watched the work as it proceeded swiftly and without a hitch.

Each wagon as it was unloaded drew out of the way to make place for the one behind it, but none was allowed to depart until the last case was in the brig's hold.

Every case and package was of a size and weight that one man could lift and carry a short distance at least.

This was a precaution necessary to assure rapid handling during subsequent debarkation on the Cuban coast, when proceedings might be interrupted at any moment by the sudden appearance of the Spanish coast guard, always on the watch for a filibustering expedition.

At last the hatches were clapped on and secured, and preparations were soon under way for getting the brig out of the creek, for the tide was now at its flood.

Captain Finley bade Juan Balmaceda good-by and stepped on board the Lone Star, while the Cuban agent issued orders to the teamsters to move out to the road and return to town.

There was a creaking of ropes through blocks, the upper sails were loosened out to catch the breeze now stronger than before, and within fifteen minutes the brig was heading out to sea with all sail set.

Morning came and the Lone Star was out of sight of land, with her nose pointed southward.

Four bells, indicating six o'clock, had just been struck forward when Will Newton came to his senses.

The first thing he became aware of was that he had a splitting headache.

The next that his bedroom, where he supposed he was, was rising up and down and then rolling, though not heavily, from side to side.

Then there was the sound of the swishing and falling off of the waves as they gently rose and broke against the side of the forecastle within a foot of his head.

He couldn't understand it all and turned over in the bunk where he had been left by the captain.

He now heard the tramp, tramp of the watch on deck, who were washing the planks.

He looked around the close, ill-smelling and low-ceiled space which came to a point in the eyes of the brig.

There was a double tier of bunks on either side, and from several came vocal cadences suggestive of snoring.

Three or four chests and several bags filled up the larger part of the open space.

A slush lamp suspended from the center, which swung to and fro in sympathy with the motion of the vessel, threw a dim, uncertain kind of light through the place.

The morning sunshine was filtering through the scuttle opening, from which descended a short ship's ladder.

Altogether the scene was new and strange to the dazed boy, through whose head the curious heavy pain came and

went in throbs as regular as the beating of any clock, and as he lay looking about him he felt certain that he must be experiencing some horrid dream.

By and by a man's legs projected down through the scuttle, his thick-set body followed and he landed on the deck of the forecabin.

He came directly to the bunk where Will lay, and perceiving the boy's big, staring eyes fixed upon him he said:

"Well, youngster, I see you're awake. You'd better come on deck now and take a whiff of the sea breeze. That'll liven you up, and I'll give you something to do."

"What does this all mean?" cried Will, starting up on his elbow. "Where am I?"

"Where are you?" replied the mate. "Why, you're aboard the brig Lone Star, bound for the coast of Cuba."

"Aboard the brig Lone Star!" gasped Will, in amazement. "What do you mean?"

"Just what I have said—no more, no less. Come, now, rouse up and get up that ladder, or mayhap I'll freshen your way with a bit of rope's end," and the mate unwound a short length of line which had been coiled around his right hand.

"But I don't understand why I'm on board a vessel, if, as you say, I really am."

"It makes no difference whether you understand it or not. You're one of the brig's crew and you've got to do your share of duty. So put a clapper on that jaw of yours and get up. I've wasted more time with you than I usually lose over greenhorns."

He grabbed Will by the collar of his jacket and yanked him out on the deck.

"Get up that ladder, d'ye hear?" and he administered a sharp blow with the rope upon the lad's back and shoulders.

Will's first thought was to fly at the man with both fists, which he unconsciously clinched, but he decided not to do so, fortunately for himself, for the mate had noted his belligerent attitude, and raised the rope's end to strike him again.

The boy eluded further punishment by running to the ladder and climbing to the deck above.

Here he found himself in the sunshine, on the deck of the brig, which was under full sail, with the boundless, smiling ocean on every side, and not a sign of land anywhere.

The watch had just finished washing down, and were taking up other duties that lay at hand.

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Will, aghast. "I really am at sea and no mistake."

CHAPTER V.

DEAD TO THE WORLD.

We will pass over the days and nights which intervened before the Lone Star arrived in Cuban waters.

Will found them hideous enough in good truth.

He was unceremoniously hustled from pillar to post, as the saying is; brow-beaten by the two mates and utterly ignored by Captain Finley, in whom the boy recognized

the dark-featured and bewhiskered stranger who had accompanied Dick and himself from the village that night. Mr. Bacon sent him for the stationery that he wanted.

He had to work like a slave, received many a curse and blow, and not a sympathetic thought from one of the crew, who were a pretty reckless set, as befitted the enterprise in which they were engaged.

Though sick and disheartened with it all, wondering alike how he came to be kidnapped and whether he would soon be able to make his escape, he found that the easiest way out of his many troubles was to appear cheerful and do the best that was in him to satisfy the two mates, who bossed the crew as their sweet will dictated.

The third day out the Lone Star had run into a stiffish gale, and for twenty-four hours Will was in the throes of sea sickness.

Next day the weather cleared and by night the boy was able to get about again.

The food which he had scarcely been able to touch before he now ate ravenously, and some of his associates began to look upon him with a trifle more respect.

At sunset on the seventh day the shores of Cuba hove in sight.

The brig's sail was shortened and she was kept away until night had settled down, dark and blustering, and then Captain Finley, who was tickled to death over the atmospheric conditions, which promised to hide his approach from the Spanish cruisers, had her headed for a certain point along the coast.

As soon as he was close enough in he began to flash a bright signal at regular intervals.

This was presently answered by a similar signal from the shore, indicating that all was clear, apparently.

The brig then sailed nearer the land, as close as it was safe to go, while the crew were busily engaged in breaking out the cases that were to be sent ashore in the boats.

At length the brig was hove to, the boats brought around to her gangway, and as fast as they received their load were rowed ashore.

Will was sent in the first boat, by the captain's orders, and he made several trips in her before all the stuff was on the beach, and whisked out of sight by the insurgents, who had mules and horses waiting to carry it off to one of their strongholds not far away.

The last load to leave the brig went in Will's boat and the captain accompanied her to the beach, where he met the Cuban leader of the detachment, and received from him a receipt for the stuff.

By this time all the men were back in their places except Will, whom the captain detained on the shore.

Suddenly a warning cry rose from the last bunch of insurgents, and almost instantly several rifles cracked in the shrubbery a hundred yards away.

"The Spaniards!" cried the officer, pushing Captain Finley toward his boat, and taking to his heels.

Will made a dive for the boat, but was seized by the skipper.

"Go with that officer!" he cried, roughly pushing the boy from him.

Then he stepped into the boat and ordered his men to push off.

The boat receded into the darkness, the Cuban officer had vanished, and Will was left alone on the beach.

There was a smart interchange of shots between the Spanish soldiers and the retreating insurgents, and in the midst of it all a squad of Spaniards burst out of the bushes and came running toward the spot where the abandoned boy stood.

Before he realized the situation he was surrounded by half a dozen Spanish soldiers and taken prisoner.

The sergeant of the party flashed a light about the beach and saw numerous tell-tale signs which showed him that contraband goods had been successfully landed, and he swore a frightful string of Spanish oaths.

The firing was still going on, receding toward the interior of the island.

At length the sergeant turned upon Will and flashed the lantern in his face.

"Who are you?" he demanded, roughly, in Spanish.

He might have asked the question in Chinese for all the boy understood him.

"Why don't you answer me?" he demanded, furiously shaking Will by the shoulder.

The boy shook his head.

"I don't understand you," he replied.

"Es usted Americano?" (Are you an American?)

Will understood that Americano meant American, and he nodded.

"You do not understand Spanish?" said the soldier, fiercely.

Will shook his head, though he didn't understand what the Spaniard said.

The sergeant glared at his prisoner and then spoke a command to his detachment.

They formed about the boy and the whole party moved off toward the bushes.

"Gee whiz! I'm in a nice kettle of fish!" thought Will, as he kept step to the tramp of the soldiers. "I suppose I'll be put in prison and kept there awhile."

Fortunately for his peace of mind he did not realize the peril which surrounded him.

He did not know that his life, even more than his liberty, was at stake.

Tramp, tramp, tramp, the squad and the prisoner marched through the luxuriant vegetation until after more than three miles had been covered they came to a halt before a block-house on a bit of rising ground which commanded a kind of valley round about.

Here they were met by the officer in charge, and to him the sergeant proceeded to make his report, which he emphasized by pointing to his prisoner.

The officer first addressed Will in Spanish, and finding that he did not appear to understand him, he continued in bad English.

In this way, after much difficulty, the boy gave his name, age, his nationality, and in response to his occupation replied that he had been kidnapped aboard the vessel which had landed the contraband goods.

The officer received the last information, which he did not seem to understand thoroughly, somewhat incredulously, and then started to question Will about the cargo which had been landed and carried off into the interior by the insurgents.

Will gave him the full particulars as far as he knew.

The boy was then led into the block-house, his arms bound behind him, and a soldier placed where he could keep him in sight.

A blanket was brought to him, and after ruminating awhile on the vicissitudes of fortune he fell asleep and did not wake until he was aroused by a soldier at sunrise.

A tin cup of black coffee, a slice of bread and some cold meat were handed to him for his breakfast, after which the officer told him he was to be taken to a town in the interior, where his fate would be decided.

A corporal and four soldiers took charge of Will and the march began.

When they entered the valley the rank luxuriance of the vegetation astonished the American boy, for it was a perfect tangle of tropical growth.

Flowers and plants he had never heard about greeted his eyes on every side, with gorgeous blossoms and trailing vines, all drenched with the heavy dew of the previous night, and glistening in the sunshine.

Their course lay over no traveled roads, but across ruined estates, through plantations that showed the devastating hand of a guerilla war, under depleted orange groves and through demoralized fields of sugar cane.

They picked their way over fallen trees and rolling logs, rough stones and wild, climbing weeds, up hill and down dale, till at last they came in sight, after many hours of weary travel, of El Cristo.

The little detachment with its prisoner marched to the office of the commandante, and the corporal presented a lengthy document in writing to the official in charge.

After a long delay, during which Will was permitted to rest himself on a stone seat, he was admitted before the commandante and questioned by an interpreter.

His answers coincided practically with the report brought by the corporal, and after a consultation with an aide the commandante ordered him taken to the military prison, and a full report was forwarded to the Spanish general of that department at Santiago de Cuba.

Under ordinary circumstances the commandante would have disposed of the case himself, as he had full authority to do, and the chances are the prisoner would have been shot at sunrise.

But the lad's youthfulness, and his ingenuous confession, as it was so considered, induced the commandante to throw the responsibility on his superior.

After a wait of five days Will received marching orders again.

This time his destination was Santiago, and he was forthwith despatched to that city under a suitable escort.

On their arrival the party marched through the narrow, badly paved streets to the military headquarters—a rambling one-story building, without windows, without chimneys, and without any elevation above the street.

In place of windows were iron-barred openings, extending from the floor almost to the ceiling, and provided with inside shutters that could be closed in case of storm, and in which was inserted one pane of thick, opaque glass that admitted light, but was not transparent enough to see through.

Will was examined privately by the general and his answers taken down in a book by one of his aides.

After this ordeal he was confined in a common jail.

On the following afternoon he was brought before a military tribunal and formally tried.

He was convicted of aiding and bringing comfort to the enemy, the insurgents, and on account of his youth, the officers voted for imprisonment for life in the dungeons of Morro Castle, a formidable fortification which crowned the heights of the narrow, tortuous entrance to Santiago Bay.

Will was immediately taken there, and within an hour was face to face with the yellow walls, embrowned turrets and time-stained battlements of his future home, which surmounted the abrupt height which rose threateningly from the sea.

The rocky base, deep moat, and huge drawbridge of the fifteenth century, formed a frowning, though most picturesque object, against the blue background of a cloudless sky; with the green waters of the sea curling around its base, and the red and yellow colors of the Spanish flag waving from its apex, while its black-mouthed cannon pointed savagely oceanward.

Excavated out of solid rock on which this ancient fortress still stands, were the cells, offices and torture chambers of the Inquisition, used in times when the "Holy Office" assumed to be arbiter of all Spanish-America.

Into one of these cells, where the light of day never penetrated, Will Newton was thrust, and when the great iron door clanged behind him, the sound echoing through the silent corridors of the bowels of the fortress like the knell of doom, the brave young American boy was as one dead to the world.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MYSTERIOUS TICKING ON THE DUNGEON WALL AND WHAT LED TO IT.

Imprisoned for life—just imagine what that sentence meant to a healthy, vigorous boy of fifteen, fresh from the untrammelled freedom of American schoolboy life!

Will Newton at first hardly realized the hopeless character of his confinement.

Boy-like, he was full of hope that after a few months at the furthest he would be released and sent back to America.

He could not believe that he was really entombed for the course of his natural life.

But when the weeks elapsed into months, and the months rolled into years, he gave up hope of seeing the light of day again, or America, or his dear mother's face.

He became a dejected, hopeless prisoner, to whom the lapse of time, of which he had long lost track, ceased to be of interest, and he spent his waking hours in such childish amusements as his fancy and his facilities permitted.

The man who twice daily brought him his portion of bread and water, with an occasional piece of meat on Sunday, and upon the more important feast days of the Church, judged that the boy was growing weak-minded through solitary confinement in his underground prison but he was wrong—Will Newton had merely relapsed into a lethargic condition, due to the lack of all that makes life worth living.

It needed but a spark of hope, or a new sensation, to arouse him to his old boyish vigor once more, and this revivifying touch came to him one night after he had been immured in the underground cell for a period of two years and six months.

He was listlessly leaning against the wall of his dungeon, wondering whether it was night or day in the great world outside when he heard a peculiar rhythmic tapping in the masonry behind him.

He listened, and after a short time the sound stopped, only to be resumed presently, with variations as though some one was scraping with a hard instrument on the rocks.

"What can that be?" mused Will, for the first time in many months taking an interest in what was going on around him. "Who or what is making that noise? It seems to be going on behind me."

He put his ear to the wall and listened intently.

Tick—tick—tick! Scrape—scrape—scrape!

The sound went on at intervals for hours, then it suddenly ceased.

After listening for a long time in vain for it to recommence again, Will went to sleep.

When he awoke the presence of a jug of fresh water and a hunk of coarse bread showed the boy that his jailer had made his usual round of the cells and gone away again.

During the many hours of complete silence which now reigned in that subterranean cell the boy thought of nothing but that ticking and scraping noise that he had heard in the wall.

He hadn't the slightest idea what it meant, nor what had caused it.

"It's the first sound, outside that made by the jailer, I've heard since I've been here, and heaven alone knows how long I've been here. It seems like many years. I must be a man by this time, though I feel just like I used to in the dear old days at home. Of course, I've been given up as dead long ago, and no doubt Mr. Bacon and Moses shed few tears over my disappearance. Poor mother! How did she take it? Is she still alive? And Dick Bumstead! I'll bet he often wondered what happened to me. I remember

I was to meet him the next morning to go on one of our little expeditions, and next morning I was far out at sea on board the Lone Star. Hello! There it is again!"

The ticking and scraping had recommenced in the same place, and it seemed nearer, if anything, than before.

It continued as before for hours, with intervals of silence.

Day after day the same mysterious sound was repeated—always about at the same time.

Sometimes it sounded near and sometimes farther off, but always in the same place.

Will got used to it at last and gave it little attention.

One day, however, he noticed that it was louder than usual.

At first he thought this was mere fancy on his part, but when he placed his ear close to the wall he was certain he was not deceived—it was much nearer, apparently only a few inches away, as if the thing, whatever it was, was working its way toward him.

He was rather startled at this idea, and on the impulse of the moment he yelled out:

"Hello, there!"

The noise stopped like magic and did not go on again for what Will judged to be several days, then he heard it again.

Suddenly a great light seemed to flood his mind.

The noise must be the result of the effort of a prisoner in the adjoining cell to break his way through the wall, fancying maybe it would lead him to the freedom he craved.

Will now began to examine the surface of the wall with his fingers and found that instead of a mass of solid rock, which he had supposed it to be, that it was a stone partition erected to divide the subterranean apartment into two sections.

He located the exact spot whence the sound proceeded and found it was on the mortar line.

"By George!" he cried, in great excitement. "It's a prisoner trying to escape. Maybe he thinks this way leads to a corridor. I'd like to see and talk to him, if only for companionship."

It didn't occur to him at the moment that the prisoner on the other side of the wall was probably a Spaniard, and that neither would be able to understand the other.

"I wonder how I could help him get through faster? Ah! my iron spoon! I'll use that on the mortar this side. It will furnish me with an occupation that will keep my thoughts off this eternal monotonous idleness."

So he got the spoon and began to dig at the mortar.

Hardly had he begun before the noise on the other side ceased.

He kept on, however, with unflagging zeal, gradually loosening good-sized chunks of the mortar all about the particular stone he had selected to work up, whose size he could only tell by feeling around it.

For two years and a half the only light he had seen was the gleam from his jailer's lantern.

His eyes had grown accustomed to the gloom of his dun-

geon, and he could see its four naked walls clearly, even in the intense darkness which prevailed there.

His water-jug and plate he could also always make out, and his small iron cot in a corner, and the stool on which he was accustomed to sit.

There was nothing else in his cell.

His jailer, accustomed to the light of day, could make out nothing in the cell when he came there until he flashed the lantern around.

And he had long ceased to look for anything but to see that his prisoner was alive when he called.

Half an hour after the scraping and ticking on the other side stopped it was resumed once more, as if the other person had realized at last that a fellow-unfortunate was close at hand and that he had determined to communicate with him.

Will worked till his fingers ached, and only stopped through sheer weakness to operate the iron spoon any longer, for the further he dug into the mortar the more difficult became the job.

After an hour's rest, during which the noise on the other side had also ceased, he began again, and soon the ticking and scraping was heard again through the rock, and much louder than ever.

Suddenly a long piece of steel broke through the mortar and struck Will on the hand.

It was withdrawn and then came through in another place.

Will stopped work and waited with great eagerness for further developments.

At length a hole an inch in width almost and three in height had been made, and through it the boy saw the faint, flickering light of a candle.

Then came a pause, the light disappeared and he heard a voice accost him in Spanish.

"I don't understand you," Will answered, slowly and distinctly, with his lips close to the opening.

He heard the person utter an exclamation, and then came in perfect English:

"Who are you?"

"I'm an American boy, sentenced to this dungeon for life."

These words were greeted with another exclamation of surprise.

"An American boy! What's your name?"

"Will Newton."

"What crime were you accused of?"

"Helping to land contraband goods on the coast of this island."

"Then the Cubans have risen against the Spaniards again?"

"They were fighting the Spaniards at that time."

"How long ago was that?" asked the voice, which had the quaver of age.

"I don't know; but it must have been several years ago."

"And you have been in that cell ever since?"

"Yes."

"And have lost all track of time?"

"I have."

"Poor boy! Poor boy! I, myself, have been in this dungeon ten years."

"Ten years!" cried Will.

"Ten years. The jailer comes night and morning, and I have counted the days by means of bits of mortar which I chipped off. When I have accumulated thirty pieces I put one aside as a month and begin over again. When I have the twelve extra pieces I count five more to make 365 days, and then I place a piece on a flat stone in a corner to represent a year. There are now ten pieces of mortar on that stone, and I have also three pieces representing months, and fifteen for days. I have therefore been in this cell ten years, three months and fifteen days all told."

CHAPTER VII.

THE PRISONER IN THE OTHER DUNGEON.

Will Newton, with his ear at the narrow aperture on his side, easily heard every word spoken by the other prisoner, who had removed one of the stone blocks entirely and had his face thrust into the opening as far as it would go.

"Are you an American?" asked Will, when the other came to a pause.

"Yes. A Downeaster. I hail from Salem, Massachusetts, and my name is Phineas Dodge. I will tell you all about myself, and how I came to be buried in this place after we have removed the stone on your side. Talking will then be much easier on your part. Then, too, we'll be able to clasp the hand of fellowship and see each other. I've only seen two human countenances in the last ten years—my jailer's and Pasqual Martinez's. The latter is as great a villain as remains unbung, and he is the cause of my being in this dungeon. But it will do him no good. I swear to that. I have thwarted him so far, and I shall do so to the end, even if I have to rot here."

Phineas Dodge ceased speaking and resumed his work on the stone, with Will helping on the other side.

After two hours of labor the stone was loosened sufficiently for a push on Dodge's part to move it outward, and Will, exerting his strength, soon drew it out and laid it down on the floor.

The Downeaster thrust his arm through the hole and the boy clasped him by the hand.

Then Phineas Dodge got the small piece of candle which, through the orders of Pasqual Martinez, had been allowed him, and held it so the boy could see his face.

"I was fifty-four when I was imprisoned in this cell," he said. "I dare say I have aged more than ten years in appearance. My hair and beard have grown wild and both have turned white. My clothes are little better than rags. But my spirit has not changed, and Pasqual Martinez will never bend it to his purpose."

He thrust the candle forward so as to examine Will's face.

"You are indeed a boy—a boy of eighteen, though you

look to be all of twenty, but I make allowances for the trouble you have been through. How old were you when you were brought here?"

"Fifteen."

"Then you have easily lost three years out of your life—three precious years."

"Well, I shouldn't kick if I could get away from this place now and back to New Jersey where I came from."

"So you hail from New Jersey, do you?"

"Yes; from near the coast, though I was born in Trenton."

"Well, I shall want you to tell me all about the cause which led you into this terrible scrape in which you are now placed. We will postpone further confidences for the present, as I know it is nearly time for the jailer to visit us. Return the stone to its niche, and I will do the same on this side. Then when we are once more safe from interception for the night we will renew our talk."

The candle was withdrawn and Dodge proceeded to block up his end of the hole.

Will followed his example, and was not a moment too soon, for hardly had he accomplished it before he heard the ponderous key rattle in the lock of his cell door, the door was opened a little way and a plate of bread and jug of water were thrust inside.

"Hand we the other plate and jug," said the Spaniard, gruffly, in bad English, and Will passed them out to him as he had been accustomed to do ever since he had been in the dungeon.

Then the door was slammed to and locked and the man went on to the Yankee's cell, where the same programme was gone through with.

After that he took his departure for the regions above, and silence once more reigned in that solitary corridor.

Half an hour passed away, which both the prisoners employed to leisurely eat their frugal repast, and then Dodge once more opened up communication with his young neighbor.

Will told him that his father was dead, but that his mother married again.

Then he went on to tell how he had never been on the best of terms with his step-father and step-brother, and that he ascribed the difficulty to the fact that he was heir to all the property left by his own father, and that while he lived Mr. Bacon could only handle the estate under certain restrictions.

Coming down to the day he and his friend Dick Bumstead had visited the mysterious brig anchored in the creek not far from the house, he told Phineas Dodge about that night visit to the village, their meeting there with the dark-featured man with the whiskers, who subsequently turned out to be the captain of the Lone Star, and how the man had gone with them as far as Bumstead's house, and then went on to the lane alone.

"I remember looking down the lane as I passed the gate to see if the mariner was in sight. The next thing I knew was waking up in the forecastle of the brig, far out at sea,

next morning. Just how I was kidnapped I have never understood. It has been a great mystery to me. We were seven days at sea before we reached the northern shore of this island. The goods were safely landed and carried off by the insurgents, and there didn't seem to be any trouble in sight while Captain Finley was talking to the Cuban officer. If I had been in my place in the boat, as I feel I should have been, I would not have got into this trouble; but it looks to me as if the captain wanted to be rid of me, for he kept me on the beach, and I believe he was making some bargain with the Cuban with respect to me when the Spanish soldiers appeared. The Cuban, however, started off at the first fire, and I was following the captain into the boat when he shoved me back on the beach, at the same time ordering his men to shove off, which they did. Of course, I didn't know what to do and was easily captured."

Will then rehearsed his subsequent experiences as a prisoner, ending in his conviction before a court-martial, and his sentence to solitary confinement for life.

"I was brought here," he concluded, "and that's the whole story."

For some minutes after the boy had ceased speaking, Phineas Dodge pondered over his short, but strange story.

"It is evident that you were kidnapped from your home for some purpose," he said at length. "I cannot see what Captain Finley's object was, as you being a greenhorn at sea you could have been of little use to him. Why should he take all the trouble of carrying you off merely to abandon you to almost certain death on the Cuban coast, seven days later?"

"That's what I can't understand," replied Will. "Many and many a time I've tried to think the matter out, but can't make head or tail out of it."

"Look here, my lad, when a murder has been committed and the police try to get at the bottom of it, perhaps to get a clew to the unknown assassin, or to bring the guilt home to the person caught red-handed, they begin by considering what was the motive for the crime. In your case, my boy, what we want to discover is what object did Captain Finley have in doing away with you, for it seems to me that was his purpose in abandoning you on the beach where the Spaniards were bound to get you. No man knew better than this Finley what fate awaited persons caught in the act of landing contraband goods on the Cuban shore—he was in the trade and carried his own life in his hands. That you were not shot off-hand I believe is largely due to your youthfulness. Now, why did Finley consign you to this fate? Do you think he could have been employed to do this?"

"Employed!" exclaimed Will, in the utmost astonishment. "Why, who would employ him to do such a thing?"

"Somebody, perhaps, who would gain largely by your death."

"And who would gain largely by my death?"

"According to your own statement there was one man who would be greatly benefited by your early taking off."

"And who could that be?"

"Your step-father."

"Mr. Bacon!" gasped the boy.

"Precisely. Mr. Bacon."

"Why, he wouldn't be guilty of such a thing as that surely," said Will. "We didn't hitch well, it is true; but to conspire to actually do me up I cannot believe——"

"Now, Master Newton, remember, I don't say that he did do it. There is no proof that he made such a move. But let us for the sake of argument look into this thing. First of all, tell me what kind of man is this Mr. Bacon?"

Will gave Phineas Dodge a mental picture of his step-father's character as he had sized him up.

"What sort of woman is your mother?"

The boy told him.

"It is clear that with you out of the way for good, Mr. Bacon would have full swing with that property of yours, and if he outlived your mother he would come into it all. It was a great temptation for a man in his position, without any property of his own to speak of. Men have committed murder for a deal less than the stake in this case. I suppose you have no idea whether Mr. Bacon and Captain Finley were acquainted."

"I am almost sure they were not."

"Still you do not know for a certainty. Why did the brig Lone Star come to anchor in the creek so near your house? Was it not an unusual circumstance?"

"Very unusual, and I can assign no reason for her presence there."

"You say Mr. Bacon sent you to the village to buy something for him? Did you often go on such an errand for him?"

"No. That was the first time he ever sent me."

"Hum. The first time, eh? Why did he send you after dark?"

"He said he wanted the paper badly."

"Couldn't he have sent his son just as well?"

"I guess Moses was too much of a coward to go along the road in the dark."

"You think that was the reason, then, why he asked you to go?"

"I imagine so."

"And when you and your friend came out of the store you ran into Captain Finley?"

"Yes."

"It never struck you that he might have been waiting for you to appear, did it?"

"Why, no; I thought the meeting was purely accidental."

"I'm afraid it wasn't. It was all part of a scheme to get you on board of the brig that night. I am sorry to say that my deductions point the finger of suspicion at your step-father. He may be innocent, but he alone of those involved in your disappearance would benefit by it to a considerable degree. If you ever get away from this dungeon I advise you to look very closely into the matter before you reappear in your old haunts again."

The subject was then dropped and Phineas Dodge proceeded to tell Will something about himself.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE STORY TOLD BY CAPTAIN PHINEAS DODGE.

"For years I was captain of a fast schooner in the fruit trade, sailing between New York and Matanzas, Cuba. On my last trip, while lying at anchor in the bay, a singular incident happened, which has been the cause of my subsequent misfortunes. I remember it was about eight o'clock in the evening. I was seated on the deck enjoying the cool breeze that came in from the sea, when shots were heard on shore. I noticed that there seemed to be some confusion on one of the wharves, but it soon died out, and I was beginning to forget all about the matter when suddenly I heard a call for help directly under the stern. I looked over the rail and plainly saw in the moonlight a dark face in the water. The swimmer seemed to be exhausted, so I threw him a rope, which he seized and held on to until I had a boat lowered and the man taken aboard the schooner. He was a Spanish seaman, and was desperately wounded in the side. He said he had been shot by some soldiers on shore. I was going to send for a surgeon, but he urgently begged me not to. He knew he was going to die, and that no surgeon could have his life. His appearance did not belie his words. I had him taken into the steerage quarters, for I did not believe he would survive the night. He didn't, but before he died he confided to me a secret, the possession of which had cost him his life."

Phineas Dodge paused to take breath.

"I haven't talked so much as I have to-day since I was put in this cell, and I suppose it's a surprise to my lungs," he said, with a weak smile.

"I don't see how you could have stood ten years down here," said Will, sympathetically. "I shall be dead long before that if I don't get out."

"No one knows what he can stand until he is brought against the inevitable," said Captain Dodge, with something like a sigh. "Well, as I was saying, this sailor confided to me the fatal secret which cost him his life, and from that hour its fatality moved on to me, its new possessor, for in forty-eight hours I was in the power of the man who had made up his mind to wring that secret from me at any cost."

"Who was that man?" asked Will, curiously.

"Pasqual Martinez, an officer in the Spanish army. He is now commandante of this fortress."

"The secret you speak of must be an important one."

"It is the key to a fabulous fortune."

"A fabulous fortune!" cried Will.

"Yes. A fortune so great that its possessor might well be considered a multi-millionaire."

"Good gracious! Is it all money?"

"No; though there are probably several million in coined gold and silver, chiefly the latter. The most important part consists of priceless gems, whose value is beyond ordinary calculation."

"And you know where this treasure is to be found?"

"I do. The Spaniard who died aboard my vessel furnished me with the clew to its location. He had visited the place himself and brought away a small quantity of the money, but nothing to speak of. His purpose was to interest some person he could trust, charter a small vessel, visit the island and recover the treasure by degree. Unfortunately, he got hold of the wrong man, for it was to Pasqual Martinez he broached his plan, and offered an even half of all that was obtained. The rascal eagerly accepted the proposition, but before he moved in the matter he demanded to be put in possession of all the particulars. This the Spanish sailor refused to accede to, for his suspicions had been aroused that the officer's intentions were treacherous, and that he was not to be trusted. Martinez, finding the sailor stubborn on the point he wished to arrive at, and suspecting that the man meant to seek another partner in the enterprise, as was true, had him clapped into jail on a trivial charge, and threatened to keep him there indefinitely unless he agreed to give up his secret. Within a week, however, the Spaniard escaped from the jail, but was tracked to the wharves by Martinez, who was hot on his trail. He was endeavoring to get away in a small boat when the soldiers who accompanied Martinez fired upon him in the effort to head him off. Mortally wounded, he fell into the bay and the tide carried him out to my vessel, where, as I have already said, he was rescued and brought aboard. Conscious that he could not live, and grateful to me for aiding him, he told me the story of the treasure, and gave me explicit directions how to reach the small, uninhabited island where it lies buried in the sands of the shore. He died chuckling to think he had outwitted Pasqual Martinez."

"Well?" said Will, who was listening eagerly to the captain's story.

"But Captain Martinez was not so easily outgeneralled as might be supposed. Next morning I sent the Spaniard's body ashore with the report to the proper town official that the man had been rescued in a wounded condition the night before, and had died aboard my schooner before morning. This information reached Pasqual Martinez's ears, and he hastened to pay me a visit. He wished to learn all the particulars of the man's death, and I told him as much as I thought proper. He was not satisfied. Men of his caliber are always suspicious. He interviewed some of my crew and learned that I was with the sailor for a long time before he died. This led him to suspect the truth. On the following day I received an invitation from him to dinner at a noted restaurant, and, foolishly, accepted. He drugged me, then called a carriage and had me conveyed to a building on the outskirts of Matanzas. When I regained my consciousness I found myself a prisoner. Pasqual then presented himself before me in his true character. He demanded I should tell him the sailor's secret. I denied all knowledge of the treasure, but he would not believe me. He threatened to keep me a prisoner until I confessed. I believed such a threat to be beyond his power to make good, and laughed at his words, telling him that

unless I was immediately set free I would, at the earliest opportunity, make it hot for him through the American consulate."

"And what was the result?" asked Will, breathlessly.

"You see the result—I am here. By some means he secured my transportation to this prison, the commandante of which was a friend of his. Five years later he became commandante of this fortress himself, and since that time he visits me regularly once a month, with his mouth full of promises he does not mean to keep, in the ever vain attempt to learn the secret he is sure I possess."

"But unless you can get free the secret is valueless to you," said Will. "Why did you not make a bargain with him for a divison of the treasure?"

"Because he demands to know all before he will open my dungeon door. But once that knowledge is in his possession do you think he would keep his word? Not at all. Though I believe there is more treasure on that island than he could ever spend, were he to live to reach a hundred, still the scoundrel hungers for every penny of it, and would divide with no man. I would be left to die and rot here, while he enjoyed all the fruits of the sailor's secret. I am no fool. I can read Pasqual Martinez like a book. He is a treacherous rascal, without one redeeming quality. I may stay here during the few remaining years of my life, but at least he shall not have the satisfaction of learning where that treasure lies buried."

That ended the conversation that night, the stones were returned to their places and the two prisoners lay down to rest.

It was a long time, however, before Will got to sleep.

The excitement of meeting with, and talking to, a fellow-creature, especially one of his own countrymen, after two years or more of solitary confinement, kept his nerves for a long time on the tingle.

Then the strange story of the wonderful treasure, the secret of which had cost one man his life and another an imprisonment of over ten years, worked upon his imagination, and kept him guessing as to its real value and the spot where it lay concealed from human eyes.

When at last he did fall asleep he had grotesque dreams about the treasure, with all of which he himself was identified, together with a dark, wicked-looking man whom he seemed instinctively to recognize as Pasqual Martinez.

And it was from one of these grewsome phantasies that he awoke to find the jailer at the door with his morning supply of bread and water, and a piece of meat, for it was a great Church feast-day.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DEAD SPANISH SAILOR'S SECRET.

Every day thenceforward Will Newton and Captain Phineas Dodge conversed through the hole in the wall which separated their dungeons.

Nor were their hands idle, for they worked steadily to

enlarge the opening by removing stones enough to enable the boy to crawl through into the adjoining cell.

It took all of two weeks to accomplish this.

Phineas Dodge explained to Will that his idea of penetrating the wall was for the purpose of ascertaining if he could reach the corridor through what he believed to be an empty cell.

Had his plan been successful, he thought he might possibly be able to make his way by night out of the dungeons to a window through which he might crawl and thus perhaps escape from the fortress altogether to an American or English vessel in the harbor, where he could claim protection.

Every day now, between the visits of the jailer, Will spent in the society of the white-haired and white-bearded old sea captain.

Their companionship proved a great consolation and pleasure to each.

It wasn't long before Phineas Dodge confided the secret of the buried treasure to his young friend.

"I am satisfied it will never do me any good," he said, with a weary sigh. "My days are numbered. I shall die here, and my body will probably be tossed to the fishes by the enraged and disappointed Martinez. It is different with you. You are young. Some day the insurgents will overpower the Spaniards and take possession of the island. Then at least your prison doors will fly open and you can walk out a free man—for you will in all probability be a man by then. Keep up your courage and hope for the best. Remember that the secret I am now going to confide to you will put you in possession of more wealth than you could ever earn in a thousand years. That all you will have to do is to get it and then settle down to the enjoyment of it—a pleasure that comes to but the most privileged in this world."

Will began to feel encouraged by the old captain's words.

"Now listen," continued Phineas Dodge. "I suppose you've heard of the buccaneers of the Spanish Main, my lad?"

"Yes, captain. I read a book about them once," answered Will.

"Those rascals originated from the French settlers in the small West India islands, whom the Spaniards, impelled by that jealousy of other nations which so often led them to acts of great cruelty, drove out of St. Christophers, and other islands, in almost a destitute state. Many of them took refuge in St. Domingo, which then swarmed with wild cattle. These they hunted, dried the flesh in the fashion of the Carib's 'boucan,' as these natives called it, and from the habit they took their name. The Spaniards, however, discovered their settlements, and sent expeditions to uproot them. The hunted buccaneers then abandoned hunting cattle and taking to the sea turned upon their enemies. The rich Spanish ships offered a splendid booty, enriching them and injuring their cruel persecutors. In the early part of the seventeenth century they drove the Spaniards from Tortugas, an island lying off the north-

west coast of Hayti, erected fortifications and made it their headquarters. One of their greatest commanders was a man named Morgan, and he made things mighty warm for the Spanish trade and Spanish seacoast towns, even extending his lawless operations to the ships and settlements of other nations—in other words he was a pirate pure and simple, like Blackbeard, Captain Kidd, and others of their class. The treasure-ships or galleons then sailed only in fleets, well guarded by men-of-war; but the buccaneers hung around them like wolves, and pounced upon any that straggled or were driven off their course. In this way the rascals amassed untold wealth in gold and silver money, bars of precious metal, and jewels and church ornaments of great value."

"What did they do with it all?" asked Will.

"They spent a good deal of it one way or another in riotous living, gambling and such like, but the greater part they buried in different places among the islands."

"And was it ever recovered?"

"Much of it was, doubtless; but Morgan's storage trove never came to light, and it is with that the Spanish sailor's secret is connected."

"Is it possible!" exclaimed Will, opening his eyes very wide indeed.

"He assured me that he had seen this treasure trove with his own eyes, and that the accumulation of gold, silver and gems which he actually handled fairly dazzled him. But even that vast store did not represent all of the wealth that lay within reach. He said that within a short distance of Morgan's cache lay the buried hulks, almost side by side, of three Spanish galleons that must have gone ashore on the island during a storm. The upper works of one of these still showed above the sand, but the others were completely buried, and it was only by mere accident that he discovered their existence."

"Do you mean to say that Morgan's treasure trove and those three wrecked galleons have lain for a matter of two hundred years without a human being other than this Spanish sailor becoming aware of the fact?" cried Will, in amazement.

"That's what I mean to say, if there is really any truth in the man's story, and his earnest disclosure at the point of death, coupled with the extraordinary efforts made by Pasqual Martinez to wrest the secret from me, assures me that there is. I am fully satisfied in my own mind that that vast treasure lies exactly where it was placed by Morgan's men; and I do not doubt but that the buried galleons are there, too."

"And where is this remarkable island?" asked the boy. "It must be uninhabited and probably out of the track of most vessels."

"It is a small island due east of Turk Island, which is on the extreme end of the Bahama group. It's exact distance from Turk Island is between ten and twelve miles, and according to the Spanish sailor's reckoning its latitude is about 21 deg. 35 min. N., and longitude 70 deg. 19 min. W. Make a mental note of that fact, my lad. It is a long,

low, sandy key, and but for a fringe of banana trees, which seem to rise right out of the sea, might easily be passed unnoticed at a short distance away."

"On what part of it is the treasure hidden?"

"I have said there is a fringe of banana trees on this key. They run from near the western edge to the center, where they end in a little grove of plantain trees, noticeable for their thickness and age. In the center of this grove is a depression in the soil. Here, underneath a thin layer of sand, cast over it by the Spanish sailor, is the entrance to an underground cave excavated, fenced in and roofed over by the buccaneers to receive their ill-gotten booty. Fifteen paces away on the beach lies the wreck of one of the galleons, almost, but not quite, covered with sand."

"It seems a simple enough matter to find both the island and the treasure if it really is there," replied Will. "In fact, the whole matter seems so simple as to cause one to wonder how such a treasure trove could remain there for so many years undiscovered."

"Perhaps the very simplicity of the thing has been the real cause why it never came to light. You must bear in mind one thing, such an island would be but rarely visited, for there is nothing there to attract one ashore. There are hundreds of such keys scattered about among the greater islands of the Caribbean. The only reason they are ever visited is for the salt which accumulates on their shores. The sailor told me that there is little if any salt on this particular key."

"How did this Spanish sailor come to find out that Morgan's treasure was hidden on this key?"

"By mere accident. He was one of the crew aboard a small schooner which sailed from San Juan, Porto Rico, to the Caicos Islands, a group east of Turk Island. The schooner went ashore on this key in a storm and every soul but the Spaniard was lost. He was three weeks there before he was fortunate enough to be taken off by a native craft of turtle catchers. During that time he subsisted on bananas and the rain water he found in a kind of basin hollowed out of a rock in the plantain grove. He slept in the grove and one day he noticed an iron ring sticking up through the sand. He grasped it and found that it resisted his strength, and his curiosity induced him to scrape away the thin layer of sand to see what it was attached to. He found that it was imbedded in what appeared to be a small hatch cover. He continued to scrape away the sand till he had exposed the whole of the hatch cover. Then using all of his strength he lifted it up, disclosing a hole, with a short ship's ladder leading down to some underground place. Naturally, he went down to see what was below, and he found himself in the midst of an untold collection of wealth such as only could have been brought together by a gang of pirates."

"How could he know that it had been hidden away there by Morgan, who has been dead these two hundred years?" asked Will.

"By a ship's log book, written in Spanish, which he found there, and which contained a rough record of the

contents of the cache signed by Morgan himself, and countersigned by one of his officers. This list showed that there was a tremendous treasure there."

"And what about the stranded Spanish galleons? Did he also find a way to investigate the contents of their holds?" asked Will, in astonishment.

"He reached the cabin of the one not wholly buried and found the ship's book which told the story of how the three had gone ashore in a storm, and how the survivors were perishing of starvation on the key. The book stated that each of the vessels carried many valuable silver bars, while the flagship had on board, in addition to her share of ingots, a treasure-chest containing many golden moldores. The three galleons were bound from Panama to Cadiz, Spain, in convoy, but had evidently been separated from the main fleet by the storm, which wrecked them."

"My gracious!" exclaimed Will. "This sounds like the wildest kind of pipe-dream. If there is truth in that Spanish sailor's story there must be a regular Monte Cristo treasure on that little key."

"Every dollar of that, and more," replied Captain Dodge, nodding his white head as if perfectly assured of the fact.

"Millions! My goodness! That's an awful lot of money."

At that interesting moment from far above their heads came the thunderous reverberation of a heavy gun.

It was followed by a second, and then a third report.

The very rocks seemed to shake under the discharges.

"What can that be?" asked Will. "It's the first time I've never heard shooting from the ramparts of this fortress."

"It is impossible for me to say," replied Phineas Dodge, shaking his head.

The two prisoners did not know that war had been declared between the United States and Spain, six weeks previous.

They did not know that this was the night of the momentous June 3, 1898, which marked one of the most daring and sensational achievements of the war, the attempt of Naval Constructor Hobson to close the mouth of Santiago harbor, under the frowning guns of Morro Castle, in which they were confined, the water battery below and the fortress of Santa Catalina on Canones Point opposite, so that the Spanish fleet, which had taken shelter in the inner harbor, could not get out.

They did not know anything about what had taken place in the outside world since Will Newton was sent into those dungeons, and they listened wonderingly to the firing, which kept up for some time.

If they had known, how different would have been their feelings!

CHAPTER X.

A BREAK FOR FREEDOM.

The attempt made by Naval Constructor Hobson that night, or rather early morning, to effectually obstruct the

narrow entrance to Santiago harbor was not wholly successful, but that fact does not detract from the glory of the eight men who went to almost certain death.

They were captured and taken aboard the cruiser Reina Mercedes, and from there were confined in the upper cells of Morro Castle, and later in the city of Santiago.

No hint of this gallant deed on the part of their countryman, or that war was actually in progress between the two countries, reached the ears of Will Newton and Captain Phineas Dodge.

Later on they heard more heavy cannonading at times, but its import was like Greek to them.

The captain did question the jailer about the matter, but he was unusually surly and made no answer to the questions.

Exactly one month from the morning when Will learned the secret of the treasure hidden on the sandy key, the Spanish Admiral Cervera's fleet of fine, swift cruisers were entirely destroyed by the American blockading squadron while attempting to leave the harbor of Santiago.

That night, after the jailer had made his customary round, Will crawled through the hole in the wall into Captain Dodge's cell, and with the lighted candle stuck into a fissure of the rocky rear wall of the dungeon, the two resumed a conversation broken off an hour previous.

The captain was in an unusually gloomy frame of mind for him.

A singular dream he had had the previous night impressed him deeply, and he could not get the idea out of his mind that he was going to die shortly.

"Dreams don't amount to anything," said Will, striving to brighten up the old man's spirits.

"My lad, I've lived longer than you, and I believe differently," replied Phineas Dodge, in a solemn tone. "Coming events often cast their shadows before, and the literature of the world is full of instances where dreams have foreshadowed what has afterwards come to pass."

"You don't feel as if you were going to be ill, do you?" asked Will, anxiously.

"No; it isn't that," replied the old captain, mournfully. "I am oppressed by a presentiment of coming danger."

"Coming danger!" cried the boy. "You don't imagine the roof of this dungeon will fall in and crush you?"

The captain shook his head.

"The danger is coming from another source."

"What other source can it come from? You have been here ten years and a half and in all that time nothing has happened. Nothing ever does seem to happen down in this gloomy vault."

"Something is going to happen now I am afraid. The peril that seems to hedge me about is coming from Pasqual Martinez."

"What makes you think so?"

"My dream indicated it."

"If he intended to work you an injury why should he have waited so many years? He dare not kill you, for his only chance to learn the Spanish sailor's secret is in

preserving your life. With your death the chance is lost to him forever."

"That is quite true, my lad; but nevertheless he is contemplating some new move to bring me to terms, and that move, whatever it is, will settle me for good."

"I should hate to have anything happen to you, Captain Dodge," said Will, earnestly. "I have been an entirely new boy since we came together. I have ceased to brood over my confinement, and for the first time in many weary months have been buoyed up with a hope of ultimate freedom. I really don't know what I should do if you were removed from here and I did not see you any more. I believe I'd feel like throwing up my hands."

"You must not think of doing anything like that, my dear lad. You have youth and life, and while life lasts there is hope. I am sure it is only a question of time when you will be released. Keep up your courage. Do not let it be said that an American boy cannot sustain himself under the heaviest of trials. And remember your reward will come when you are out of this dungeon. You possess a golden secret—a secret that will place you beyond the dreams of avarice."

Will was about to reply to this comforting speech when suddenly, without the slightest warning, a key was softly turned in the lock of the iron door, it swung open on its hinges, and a swarthy Spaniard in undress uniform, whose evil soul was mirrored in his eyes, stepped quietly into the cell.

His alert eye took in the presence of Will Newton, and uttering a furious oath he advanced toward the two prisoners.

"Pasqual Martinez!" gasped Phineas Dodge, starting to his feet, an example immediately followed by Will.

"What does this mean?" demanded the Spaniard, in excellent English. "How came you here, boy?"

He swung aloft the lantern he carried in his hand and gazed around the cell.

His eyes lighted on the hole in the dividing wall.

"Caramba! I see!" he cried, furiously. "You have been at work, eh? And I did not suspect such a contingency! I will fix you both, never fear. There is a hole below where you shall go and rot!" he cried to Will. "In one week you shall be dead, do you understand me? And your bones will lie there as long as this rock exists."

The terrible threat came hissing from the villain's lips, and the prisoners instinctively felt that he meant every word he had spoken.

"My heaven!" cried Phineas Dodge, in a tone of horror, "you would not treat this boy so cruelly."

A smile of infernal malice curled the Spaniard's lips.

"You think I will not, eh? You do not know me, senor captain."

Then, like a flash, an idea seemed to strike him, and a crafty grin spread over his evil features.

"Perhaps you would like to save this boy? Am I right?"

"I would save him at the cost of my life!" replied the captain, nobly.

"Ah! Say you so!" purred the scoundrel. "Your life is no value to me. You are nearly dead as it is. But I will make a bargain with you. A bargain—do you understand? He shall have his life, yes, his freedom also, if you will tell me the secret I have longed for years to possess."

"I agree," replied Phineas Dodge. "But I must have some proof that you will keep your word."

"What proof do you require?" answered the Spaniard, eagerly.

"There must be an American vessel in the harbor. Send him aboard of her, and when a note from him tells me that he is in safety I will tell you all you want to know, and then you may do with me as you please."

"I agree," replied the wily Spaniard.

He knew his prisoners had no knowledge of the state of affairs in and around Santiago.

How could they guess that the city was in a state of siege?

That an American army hedged the city in by land, while a big American fleet was lying off and on outside the entrance to the harbor?

That there was no American vessel in the harbor aboard of which he could deliver Will.

The crafty Spaniard was willing to promise anything that would achieve his ends, but his mind was full of treachery toward his victims.

"You swear by your Virgin that you will deal fairly by us both, do you?" said the captain.

"Yes, yes. The boy's life for your secret. It is agreed, then?"

There was a shifty gleam in the Spaniard's eye that Will did not like.

Then his gaze shifted to the open door behind the officer, with the key in the lock, and his heart gave a great bound.

Satisfied that the rascal could not be trusted, he determined to make a desperate attempt to escape from the cell.

Whether the Spaniard read his purpose in his face, or was prepared for every contingency, it is hard to say but the moment he made his break forward, the officer's hand was on his revolver.

In an instant he had drawn it and pointed it at the fleeing boy.

Phineas Dodge saw Will's danger and springing forward seized the Spaniard's arm, thus deranging his aim.

The bullet went wild and the rascal endeavored to reach the door and cut Will off.

This purpose was defeated by the captain, who clung to Martinez with all his strength.

Turning around, the maddened Spaniard discharged his revolver into the captain's breast just as Will banged the door to and turned the key in the lock.

Captain Dodge released his grasp on the officer, clapped his hand over his heart and dropped dead to the floor.

Of this unhappy fact Will was ignorant.

His purpose was to sneak out of the fortress if he could, reach the American consulate, and have the captain rescued

from the dungeon, while he trusted that he himself would be safe under the folds of the American flag.

With this idea in view he passed to an upper corridor, which was deserted, and thence to a second, which brought him to the ground floor of the fortress.

He heard many voices in a room through which he had meant to pass, and he knew he could not escape if he went on.

There was a narrow corridor, however, which led to one of the gun embrasures.

He took this as his only chance, and two minutes later was looking out through the opening upon the rocks below and the darkness which covered the sea beyond.

CHAPTER XI.

FREE ONCE MORE.

Out at sea he could see the lights of the blockading fleet, but he hadn't the least idea to what kind of craft they belonged.

The flashing of the searchlights over the water rather astonished him.

On account of his long confinement in the dungeon below he could make out objects around him in the darkness much more readily than he otherwise would have been able to do.

He could see the rocks underneath the frowning embrasure, and down those rocks or over them he judged he would have to go in order to get away from the fortress.

"It's a tough proposition," he muttered "but not so tough as the fate in store for me if I am caught trying to make my escape. Pasqual Martinez won't do a thing to me after what I've done to-night if he should get his clutches on me. The most desperate chance is better than meeting him again."

Having made up his mind what he had to do, he lowered himself out of the embrasure on to the rocks, and with the utmost caution commenced to pick his way over them, hugging the wall of the Castle as closely as he could.

His course, however, gradually led him downward toward the sea.

"I can't understand the meaning of those lights out yonder," he mused, as he paused to rest for a few moments. "The searchlights seem to indicate that those are war vessels. I wonder if they're patrolling the coast? The Cuban insurrection must be still on. I'm afraid I shall be recaptured unless I'm fortunate enough to run against a party of the insurgents."

Slowly and laboriously Will made his way down the rocks in a diagonal direction to the beach, and in the course of an hour from the time of leaving Morro Castle he reached the water's edge.

He then trudged rapidly along the shore, for he was extremely anxious to get as far away from the Castle as he could before the sun should overtake him.

He didn't cover many miles before the daylight came on all at once, with tropical suddenness.

He dived into the rank vegetation that fringed the shore,

but before he had gone a hundred yards he was held up by a Cuban picket, who addressed him in Spanish.

Although the man was armed with a Mauser rifle, there was little of the regulation soldier about him, and the boy instantly surmised that he must be one of the insurgents.

He answered the hail in English, which the Cuban seemed to understand, and he was told to advance.

As soon as he was sure the fellow belonged to the insurgent army, Will explained that he had just escaped from Morro Castle, and asked to be taken before an officer.

His wish was complied with.

The officer could converse in English, and after the boy had told his story, which was received with some surprise and sympathy, Will in turn was enlightened as to the present state of affairs.

When Will learned that war was actually on between Spain and the United States he was astonished beyond measure, and naturally asked many questions which the officer obligingly answered as well as he could.

After Will had been treated to some breakfast he was taken before General Garcia, who was in command of the Cuban army in the vicinity of Santiago.

He went over his story again, and dwelt largely on the peril which hung over Captain Dodge, of whose death he was ignorant.

The Cuban commander decided to send the boy under escort to the headquarters of the American General, Shafter, and he was accordingly conducted thither.

Here for the third time he rehearsed the misfortunes he had undergone since he was spirited away from home, nearly two years and a half before.

Will had now recovered track of time, and when he was told that this day was July 4, 1898, he knew exactly how much time had slipped out of his young life, and that he was nearly eighteen years of age.

General Shafter sympathized with him in the trials he had passed through, and with respect to his anxiety for the fate of Captain Dodge he assured the lad that the Spaniards would soon be compelled to surrender Santiago, and then the rescue of his friend would be certain, if he was not in the meantime made away with.

Will asked and was accorded permission to remain with the army until that happy event came to pass.

A truce was agreed on between the belligerents on July 8th, and was extended to the 10th, during which the Spanish General, Toral, offered to evacuate Santiago if permitted to depart unmolested with all his troops.

General Shafter replied that the United States would accept no terms but unconditional surrender.

The attack on the city was resumed at six o'clock, July 11th, the fleet throwing shells into the town.

On the 12th, General Miles arrived and took command of the American army, and on the following day another truce was established.

The Spanish General surrendered his troops on the 14th, and on the 17th at noon the American flag was raised over the house of the civil government.

Will accompanied the detachment which took possession of Morro Castle, and the first thing he did was to have the underground dungeons searched.

To his intense disappointment there was no trace to be found of Captain Dodge, and Will never obtained a clew as to what had become of him.

He also failed to locate Pasqual Martinez among the prisoners.

As a matter of fact, though he did not know it, the Spaniard had taken refuge in the house of a friend, and after the Americans occupied the city he appeared abroad in disguise, and, for reasons of his own, to keep track of the lad's movements.

Will was very anxious to return at once to the United States to see his mother, and he was also intensely desirous of visiting the small key to the east of Turk Island, which was supposed to contain the fabulous treasure accumulated by the notorious pirate Morgan, as well as the buried wrecks of the old Spanish galleons, with their alleged cargo of silver bars, and a treasure-chest filled with Portuguese gold coin.

"If I return to my home now it will probably be years before I'll be able to look up that treasure. Now that I'm almost on the spot, probably within 500 miles of the island, I'd like to investigate the Spanish sailor's yarn, which seems to me to be extremely improbable. If there's no treasure there I'd like to know it, so as to dismiss the matter from my mind, otherwise I'll make myself more or less miserable thinking about it, and fearing that it may at any moment be discovered in the same accidental manner that the dead sailor claimed to have found it."

But Will didn't have a dollar to invest in an enterprise of this kind, nor did he possess the nautical experience necessary to guide even a small sailing boat to lat. 21 deg. 35 min. N., and long. 70 deg. 19 min. W.

With the dead Spanish sailor's experience in his mind, not to speak of what had happened to Phineas Dodge, he did not dare to take any stranger into his confidence.

He must investigate that treasure alone or not at all.

Then if he really did find it the further problem would present itself—how could he remove it from the key without any one's knowledge?

While Will was cudgeling his brains to arrive at some solution of the difficulty an opportunity presented itself by which he could work his passage to Key West, and thus get home.

He decided to accept the chance, and next day he sailed out of the harbor of Santiago on a schooner flying the American flag, the vessel taking the windward passage between Cuba and Hayti.

CHAPTER XII.

WRECKED ON THE SANDY KEY.

The name of the schooner was the *Effie Dean*, of about 800 tons burden, and the skipper's name was Obediah Cobb. His daughter, Zaidee Cobb, a pretty miss of nearly six-

teen, was with him, and she was nearly as good a sailor as the old man.

There was a mate named Jansen, and three seamen besides Will Newton and a colored cook.

It was a gusty afternoon when the schooner left Santiago and night overtook them while they were still in the windward passage.

Will had shipped as an ordinary seaman, and very ordinary at that, therefore the wages he was to get didn't cut any figure to speak of.

He was not expected to take a trick at the wheel, but Zaidee, who had taken a great fancy to the good-looking boy, induced her father to allow Will to stand at the wheel under her supervision, and she showed him more points about steering in thirty minutes than he would otherwise have learned in a month.

After he got so he could hold the schooner up to her course all by himself in the stiff wind then blowing, she continued her instructions in general seamanship, so that by the time Will was relieved by one of the regular seamen he knew considerable about handling a fore-and-aft craft like the *Effie Dean*.

Soon after dark it came on to blow hard, and by nine o'clock there was a heavy sea running and the schooner was close-reefed with her nose pointed as close to the wind as she could go.

At four in the morning she was off Cape Maysi trying to round the point in the teeth of a terrific gale, which kept all hands alive to the emergency.

By daylight the gale was at its height and the schooner was being blown far out of her course toward the northeast.

The seas were running mountain high and two men at the wheel had all they could do to keep her from broaching to and foundering.

To make matters worse, Captain Cobb was caught by an inrush of water, flung against the bulwarks and narrowly escaped going overboard.

As it was, one of his legs was twisted so bad that he couldn't stand on it, and he received other injuries that put him out of business.

A short time afterward another wave came aboard and carried the mate and one of the sailors overboard to their doom.

Then Zaidee showed the stuff she was made of by taking charge of the vessel.

Will had to go to the wheel to relieve one of the sailors, who was thoroughly exhausted, and he decided, from the looks of things, that the jig would soon be up, and that they would all be food for fishes in a few hours unless the storm moderated.

By nine o'clock the schooner was well to the north of Tortugas Island and drifting under bare poles to the eastward.

Tons of water came over her stern and sides, carrying away a portion of her bulwarks, and she shipped big seas forward every time she rolled to the windward.

Zaidee herself let the other seamen off for a spell of rest, while she and Will clung to the wheel desperately.

The climax of their misfortune came an hour later when one of the water barrels on deck broke away from its fastenings, and catching in its path the two sailors who were coming aft to resume duty at the wheel, bowled them over like a couple of nine-pins, and staving in a portion of the lee bulwark bounded over into the sea.

The wave which followed close upon the heels of the cask carried the dead seamen with it, leaving only the girl, Will, the cook and the injured skipper on the storm-tossed Effie Dean.

As though satisfied with the damage it had wrought, the gale now began to sensibly diminish, and by noon Zaidee expressed some hope of saving the schooner.

It was still blowing quite hard when night came on once more.

"Where do you suppose we are now?" asked Will, who was eating a piece of hardtack and drinking a cup of coffee the cook had managed to make with some difficulty.

"I think we're somewhere in the neighborhood of Turk Island," Zaidee answered.

That name had a magical sound for Will, since the treasure key was only about a dozen miles east of it.

The wind continued to drop steadily, and the sky to clear, much to the relief of Zaidee and her green assistants.

No doubt they would have come out all right had the sea been clear all around them, or had it been daylight.

As it happened, however, two hours later the schooner slid upon a sandy shoal and fetched up all standing.

She did not appear to have suffered any material injury, but for all that she was ashore on what seemed to be a small island, and there she was likely to stick indefinitely unless something out of the usual happened to cause her to slide back into the sea again.

"I'm afraid we're in a bad fix now," remarked Will to the girl. "I suppose it's my fault, as I was at the wheel; but I couldn't see anything ahead from here. In fact, I don't see anything now, and we seem to be fast ashore."

"I'm not blaming you, Will," replied Zaidee. "We seem to have run on one of those small keys so numerous in these seas. It may be a mere sand bank almost on a level with the water. I can't make out much of anything myself. We are in no immediate danger of our lives, as the sea is growing calmer every hour. Whether the schooner can be got off into deep water once more will depend on circumstances. Nothing can be done until morning, so as we're all pretty well exhausted by our late hard work we had better turn in without delay."

Will didn't need a second invitation, for he was thoroughly fagged out.

As for Zeb, the colored cook, he curled himself up on the floor of the galley and was asleep in no time.

Zaidee went into the cabin and explained the situation to her helpless father.

"I don't see that anything can be done in the dark to help us out of this trouble, father," she said. "We seem to be fast on a sandy bottom, the schooner is not straining her-

self at all, for wind and sea are subsiding, and if we went on at low tide we may perhaps float off by daylight."

Captain Cobb agreed that nothing could be done for the present, and so Zaidee retired to her stateroom for much-needed rest.

Morning broke in all the glory of a cloudless sky and a comparatively calm sea, but the sun was up many hours before there was any sign of life aboard the stranded schooner.

Zeb was the first to awake, and he started the galley fire right away, and began to prepare breakfast.

Half an hour later Will came from his bunk in the fore-castle, which was only a stuffy little hole in the eyes of the schooner, and the first thing he did was to look over the vessel's side to see where they were.

The bow of the Effie Dean had plowed its way into a kind of sandy inlet of a long, low island, while about two-thirds of the vessel seemed to be afloat.

The island rose toward its center in a kind of gentle elevation, the top of which was crown'd with a grove of tropical trees, and thence eastward ran a fringe of a different variety of trees in a wide semi-circle, following the conformation of the ridge.

The bulk of the island appeared to be formed of white sand, which glimmered in the morning sunshine.

As Will looked upon this tropical scene the description of the treasure key, as he had heard it from the lips of old Captain Phineas Dodge, recurred to him with startling vividness.

"Can it be possible that this is the island where Morgan's treasure is hidden in the center of yonder grove, and where the three stranded galleons lie buried in the sands of the shore?" he asked himself, excitedly. "Last night when I asked Zaidee where she thought we were she said somewhere in the vicinity of Turk Island. A little while afterward we ran ashore here. The treasure key is only about a dozen miles to the east of Turk Island, and I know we were drifting in that direction at the time. I'm going ashore to see if I can find any sign of that wreck which the Spanish sailor said was partially exposed. If I fail to find any trace of it I'll believe that the Spaniard told Captain Dodge a ghost story."

Just then Zeb stuck his head out of the galley.

"Does yer want a cup of coffee, boss?" he asked the boy.

"I don't mind," replied Will, suddenly becoming conscious of the fact that he was very hungry indeed.

"Yo' kin eat yer breakfas' now if yer wants ter," replied Zeb. "I'se got sum fried bacon an' taters dat'll melt in yo' mout'."

Before he had finished speaking Will was making tracks for the galley door, and the way he disposed of the supply of eatables that the cook placed before him was a caution, while the darkey watched him with a broad grin of satisfaction.

"Golly! Yo' eat like yo' was empty from yo' head to yo' heels," he said.

"Do you wonder, Zeb, when none of us have had anything to speak of for nearly forty-eight hours?"

"Dat's right, boss. I jess cleaned up twice as much as dat myself. I did 'spect at one time date I nebber would er had enough."

"Say, Zeb," said Will, after finishing his second cup of coffee, "can you tell me what kind of trees those are on this island?"

"I 'spect dat I kin. Jess wait till I took a look at dem."

They walked to the schooner's side, and Will pointed out the grove which rose from the center of the ridge.

"Dem trees am plantains, boss, and dose others, dat string away to de end ob de island am de banana tree. Ef yo' climb dem yo' oughter get some ripe fruit 'bout dis time."

So the grove was composed of plantains, and the fringe of banana trees.

That coincided exactly with the Spanish sailor's story.

"I'm going ashore to take a look around," said Will, with a tinge of excitement in his voice. "You can tell Miss Zaidée when she comes out of the cabin."

"All right, boss," replied Zeb, returning to the galley.

Will sprang from the schooner's deck to the shore and started at once for the grove.

"Fifteen paces from the grove along the beach is where I should see the remains of the lost galleon," said Will to himself as he hurried toward the center of the island.

But when he drew near the grove, the sandy shore as far as he could see was as smooth and unbroken as a billiard table.

"There's no sign of a wreck on this side of the island at any rate. Now to try the other side of the grove."

He mounted the ridge close to the plantain trees, which grew close together in a thick bunch.

From this point he had a clear view of a section of the shore on the northern side of the island, with the boundless, sparkling sea beyond.

His heart gave a great jump, for about a dozen yards away there rose a few feet out of the sand the rude outlines of an old-fashioned vessel's high poop.

He ran down and laid his hands upon the weather-scarred wood.

"By gracious!" he exclaimed. "I do believe this is the treasure-ship referred to by the Spanish sailor. If one thing is true, then all may be true. Morgan's long-forgotten treasure may really be hidden under that grove of plantains. If it really is there, and it's value is anything like that mentioned by the dead Spaniard, I'll be the richest boy in the world."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE PIRATE TREASURE TROVE.

The very idea of possessing an enormous amount of wealth was naturally an attractive one to the boy.

It set his nerves quivering with excitement.

He looked down at the sand as if he hungered to see

right through to the old galleon's hold where the solid ingots of virgin silver were stored, waiting for him to bring them to light for future circulation in the busy marts of the world.

"How am I ever going to make my way into the interior of that wreck?" mused Will, thinking of the tons of sand which covered her. "The Spaniard seems to have got as far as her cabin at any rate, and he had only his hands to work with. Surely with the help of a good shovel, and the assistance of Zaidée Cobb, who I think I can trust with this secret, together with a lift from Zeb, I ought to be able to do something. Still there is no hurry. I must first investigate the pirate treasure trove. That ought to be the more valuable of the two, and the easiest to be got at."

So Will entered the grove of plantain trees and made his way to the center of it.

Here he found the hollow stone the Spanish sailor had referred to, and it was full of rain water.

The open space in the heart of the plantain grove was almost circular in form, and not over three yards in diameter.

Eager to learn whether this part of the Spaniard's story was true or not, Will began to toss aside the sand, using his hands as a scoop.

He began in the very middle of the space, and he had not proceeded far before he struck something hard, and clearing away the sand saw that it was the iron ring that was imbedded in the hatch cover.

"That settles it," almost shouted the lad, in a paroxysm of delight. "The treasure is here all right. The Spaniard did see it with his own eyes as he claimed, and the treasure now is mine—all mine."

There was only a thin layer of sand on the hatch cover, and in half an hour Will had removed it all so that the hatch could be lifted.

The cover was pretty heavy, but the young American was strong in spite of his two years and a half confinement in Morro Castle, and with the incentive of wealth before him he soon had it lying bottom upward on the sand close by.

A dark hole lay below with a ship's fore-castle ladder pointing the way to the depths.

Will lost not a moment in descending, and found himself at the entrance to an underground cave of some kind.

Naturally it was pitch dark and until the lad's eyes got accustomed to the gloom he couldn't make out a single object.

"I wish I had brought a lantern," he said to himself. "It would be very convenient at this moment."

By degrees the darkness grew less opaque and he advanced.

He stumbled and fell over a small iron-bound chest on top of which lay a book.

This was evidently Morgan's log-book which the Spanish sailor had looked over and found the memorandum of the stuff stored in the cave.

Will knew that it was written in Spanish, and that he could not read a line, so he lost no time with it.

Groping around the cave he came upon a great stock of bars of metal, which he guessed must be silver ingots, all arranged in piles from the floor up as high as he was able to reach.

Near them was another chest, a good-sized one, that wouldn't budge an inch when Will tried to move it.

"I wonder if that's full of money?" thought the boy, catching his breath.

There was still a third chest further on and another big stack of metal bars near it.

"My gracious! If I can only get this stuff safely away from this island I'll be a lucky boy. But I never could do that alone. I must take Zaidee into my confidence. I am sure she is to be trusted. She's the finest girl I ever met. The best and only practical plan at present will be to get the lighter and more valuable stuff on board the schooner—such as the gold money which I believe is in one or two of those chests, and the gems, which are probably all in one chest. The silver bars can remain until I have realized enough cash to charter a vessel especially to carry them off. I'll return to the schooner now and have a talk with Zaidee. I'll bet she'll have better ideas on this subject than I have. Her father won't need to go to sea any more to make a living after this. I could hand him over enough wealth to make him rich and never miss it."

So Will went back to the schooner and found Zaidee in the cabin, eating her breakfast, with her father propped up in his bunk nearby drinking a cup of coffee and munching some ship's biscuit.

"How do you feel this morning, Captain Cobb?" asked Will, with a cheerful smile.

"So, so, my lad," replied the skipper, "and thankful that I'm in the land of the living. We all had a narrow shave in that gale—one of the worst I've ever seen—and it's a wonder, under the circumstances, that the schooner and the four of us survived, when we think that poor Jansen, and three seamen went to their death in the midst of it."

"Zaidee saved the vessel, sir," said Will, with a glance of admiration at the lithe form of the brave young girl, who had stepped into the breach under such trying circumstances.

"Yes, I guess she did," replied the skipper, with a fond look at his daughter. "What other girl of her years could have done what she did? Not one. Zaidee is almost as good a sailor as I am, and she's got nerve in an emergency."

"That's what she has," replied Will.

"Oh, come now, Will, do you want to spoil me with compliments?" Zaidee asked, laughing merrily.

For ten minutes they had quite a lively interchange of words, and then Zaidee and Will went on deck.

She looked over the stern for the second time that morning to see if there was any greater depth of water than before, but was rather disappointed to find that there was not.

"I'm afraid we're not going to have an easy time getting off this bank," she said. "We'll have to lighten the vessel forward and put some extra weight aft."

"I think I can furnish the extra weight," said Will, sparring for an opening.

"Furnish the extra weight," she exclaimed, looking at him in a puzzled way. "What do you mean, Will?"

"Look here, Zaidee, I've got a great secret to tell you," he began.

"A secret! Oh, do tell me! If there's anything I like to hear it's a secret."

"This secret is something away out of the usual thing."

"So much the better. It'll be all the more interesting," she cried, eagerly.

"You've got to promise me that you won't tell a soul, not even your father, if I tell you. It's a very important matter with me, and I am going to trust you absolutely."

"It must be awfully important," she said, noticing the earnest way he spoke.

"You shall judge of that when you know all. It's a kind of secret that a person hates to confide with a second party, but I've got to tell somebody under the circumstances, and as I like you, and feel that you won't go back on me, why, I'm going to let you into it."

"Well, I like you, too, Will, very much indeed, and you may feel sure that your secret will be perfectly safe with me."

"I am satisfied that it will. Now sit down here and I will tell you a most astonishing story."

He had already told her how he had been kidnapped from his home nearly three years before, and the misadventures he had met with in Cuba, including his imprisonment in the dungeon at Morro Castle at Santiago, and the sympathy she had felt for him had a good bit to do with the strong friendship she at once showed for him.

Now he began by telling her how he had come to make the acquaintance of the unfortunate Captain Phineas Dodge, and thus by degrees he came down to the story of the Spanish sailor's secret.

"And where is this wonderful island or key you speak of where all this great treasure is to be found?" she asked, her eyes sparkling with excitement. "What a pity that we are ashore here when we might hunt up the island and help you to take possession of the treasure."

"The island," said Will, with a grin, "is in latitude 21 deg., 35 min. North, and longitude 70 deg., 19 min. West—about twelve miles east of Turk Island."

"Then it can't be so very far from here," she answered. "I'm going to take a sight as soon as it is noon and then work out our exact position."

"And you can do that?"

"Certainly. Father taught me how to do it, and I can do it as well as he can."

"You're a wonder, Zaidee!" cried Will, enthusiastically.

"Thank you for the compliment," she answered, archly.

"Well, I think I can save you the trouble of doing that to-day."

"Why, can you take a sight with the sextant and then work out the calculations?" she asked, opening her eyes very wide.

"No," he replied, shaking his head. "I wish I could. But I happen to know the latitude and longitude of this sandy key."

"You do? Were you ever here before?"

"No."

"Then I don't see——"

"I just mentioned the latitude and longitude a moment ago. Don't drop over on the deck, Zaidee, when I tell you, but this island is the treasure key I have been telling you about."

CHAPTER XIV.

A MORNING SURPRISE.

"You don't mean it, Will Newton!" she exclaimed, astonished beyond measure.

"I do mean it."

"Why, how do you know that it is?"

"I recognized it first by that grove of plantain trees which you see yonder on the center of the ridge, and beneath which the pirate treasure cave was constructed, and the fringe of banana trees which circle around to the further end of the shore. But that was no proof, of course, that the treasure was really here, so I went ashore to investigate."

"And what did you see?" she asked, eagerly.

"I saw a small part of the hulk of one of the wrecked galleons projecting through the sand on the other side of the grove."

"You did!" she cried, clasping her hands together.

"I did. But what of that? I couldn't swear the silver is still in her hold, though I believe it is."

"Why, of course it is," she said, nodding her head, positively.

"But listen. I did get proof that the pirates' treasure is here, for I found my way into the cave, and saw every evidence of that fact."

"Is it possible!"

"And now I want you to go there with me and see, too. I could only form a general idea as to what's down in the cave as I had no light. We will take a lantern and some tools to try and break open the chests, and then we will know past all doubt what the treasure really consists of."

Naturally, Zaidee was eager to accompany Will, and having secured a lantern and such tools as they thought would answer the purpose in view, they left the schooner together in a state of high expectation and excitement.

"There is the entrance to the cave, Zaidee," said Will, pointing to the hole after they had penetrated the plantain grove.

"How horridly dark it looks down there," she remarked, with a little shudder.

"Don't be afraid of it. I've been down there, you know, and there's nothing to frighten one in the least. I'll go down first, you can hand me the lantern and tools and then follow yourself. You're too much of a sailor to need any help to descend a short ship's ladder."

Five minutes later they both stood in the cave, Will holding the lantern above his head so that its rays would shine to the best advantage.

The ingots of metal had long since turned black in that damp recess, but their true character was shown when the boy scraped one of them with the blade of a knife.

Then the bright silvery hue appeared.

"There must be several tons of silver here," said Zaidee, with dilated eyes. "There's enough to make you a rich man, Will."

"I guess there is; and to provide for you and your father and Zeb, too, for he's one of us, for life."

"And do you really mean to give father and I some of this?"

"And why not? I depend on your schooner to get the stuff away from the island. Such a rich cargo is worth a high freight. I'll make it high enough to satisfy both of you, don't you fear. I can well afford it."

Zaidee offered no further objection, as she guessed Will had enough here and to spare.

"How much is pure silver worth an ounce?"

"About fifty cents, I think."

"At that rate a ton of it would fetch——"

"Something like \$16,000."

"How much do you think is here?"

Will lifted one of the ingots.

"That may weigh 50 pounds," he said. "Figuring it out on that basis it would take forty bars to make a ton."

"Only forty? And there are hundreds of them here."

"At a rough estimate," replied Will, after counting a hundred bars, and noting the space they occupied, "I should say there were all of thirty tons of silver ingots in this cave, worth about half a million dollars. The silver itself is not what I count on. It's the gold coin in these chests, and the gems, which alone must represent a fabulous amount. It is impossible to calculate within any reasonable amount what the value of the treasure actually is. But I'm satisfied there's enough right here to make me many times a millionaire."

"You'll be the richest boy in the world!" she cried, excitedly.

"I shouldn't be surprised if it turned out that way. Now let us see if we can get a peep into these chests."

The first chest Will tackled was the big one, and the wood yielded to his implements like so much punk.

It was full of bags of coin.

Will untied one and poured some of the contents out.

It was Spanish gold of the seventeenth century.

The smaller chest also contained gold in bags.

The third chest, which was clamped with great brass corner pieces and braces, was filled with a miscellaneous collection of jewelry, with boxes of magnificent diamonds, rubies, onyxes, emeralds, in fact every precious stone under the sun—most of them of great value, for in the seventeenth century precious stones were in great demand and in universal use among all who could afford such a luxury.

To make the faintest guess as to the value of the con-

tents of that trunk was utterly impossible for either Will or Zaidee.

It figured up among the millions, for there were many stones worth all of \$5,000 apiece, and probably a fist full that couldn't be duplicated at half that price.

Will and Zaidee, after they had grown accustomed to the contemplation of so much wealth, began to consider where they should store it aboard the schooner.

"I guess there's room in the fore-castle for the contents of these three trunks," said Will. "We'll carry it to the vessel in that half-bushel basket I saw in the galley, making as many trips as may be necessary. I'll nail the jewelry and gems up in boxes, while I'll be able to find bags enough, I guess, to hold twenty of these small bags of gold each. That will make as heavy a load as one man will want to lift."

Will went to the schooner and borrowed the basket from Zeb and then he and Zaidee made their first trip with a portion of the treasure.

It took them the entire afternoon to transfer the gold and jewels to the fore-castle and secure the stuff in a handy and safe shape for subsequent handling.

Next day Zeb was pressed into service to help transfer the discolored bars of metal from the cave to a section of the hold underneath the cabin.

They worked leisurely at this job, and it took them three days to finish the cleaning out of the cave.

Then Will and Zeb commenced work on the buried wreck of the Spanish galleon.

They began to remove the sand from about the poop in order to find the entrance to the cabin through which the Spanish sailor had managed to make his way.

"I don't see how he ever did it without a shovel," thought the boy, after he and the darkey had worked the best part of a day without finding an opening.

Zeb didn't fancy this kind of work much, but the knowledge that he was going to participate in a share of the treasure encouraged him to proceed.

Will and Zeb worked two days before the poop entrance to the cabin was found.

Zaidee accompanied the boy on his first trip below.

It presented a curious sight, that antiquated cabin, buried from human eyesight more than 200 years, but everything of a perishable nature, including the bones of those who had died there had long since crumbled away to dust, and nothing remained but the bare woodwork.

The treasure-chest mentioned by the Spanish sailor was found in the largest stateroom, presumably that which had been occupied by the captain of the galleon.

Will smashed it open and found that it was loaded to the brim with loose gold.

"Gee whiz!" exclaimed the young American. "It seems to be raining gold on this island, doesn't it, Zaidee?"

The girl made no reply, for she was struck dumb with the magnitude of the riches which had come into Will's possession.

"If it's like this all through the chest there must be

several million dollars here. There were loads of coin in those days. Seems strange it should be thrown into this chest in such a loose fashion. The Spaniards must have sacked some big town, and had no bags handy to put it in."

"I never dreamed there was so much money in the world," said Zaidee.

"Ho! It's been out of circulation these 200 years and the world doesn't seem to have missed it much. It'll be a fine addition to the gold supply of the United States when I turn it into the Sub-treasury at New York to be recoined into five, ten and twenty dollar pieces. We can't do anything with this until to-morrow morning, as it's time to go to supper. Besides, we'll need some bags to pack it in. You and Zeb will have to make some to-night out of sail-cloth."

As it was now the period of the full moon the tides rose higher than usual.

That night the schooner's nose was lifted out of the sand, and at sunrise next morning when Will came on deck he found the vessel floating tranquilly on the placid bosom of the little cove.

It was no longer possible to slip over the side and land on the shore as they had been accustomed to do, but owing to the fact that the schooner had shifted her position around to the other side of the island, it was more convenient to reach the wreck of the old galleon, which now lay in full sight.

Will was presently joined by Zeb.

"Golly, boss!" exclaimed the delighted negro, "we am afloat at last, ain't we?"

"Captain Cobb was right when he said we'd probably slip off the bank at full moon," said Will. "We'll be able to sail away from this spot just as soon as we carry the contents of that chest aboard. So I'm going to get things under way while you're preparing breakfast, Zeb. I dare say I can easily wade to the beach," he added, rolling up his trousers.

"Yo' better help me lower dat small boat enyway, boss. Miss Zaidee'll wanten use it, bime by, and 'sides, yo'll need um to fotch de stuff off in."

"All right, Zeb," agreed Will, and between them they lowered the boat, and secured her by her long painter.

Then Will took the half-bushel basket and the lantern and went ashore.

He dived down into the galleon's cabin and began the delightful task of filling the dozen bags he had brought along with the yellow coin.

After that he scooped as much of the coin into the basket as he could lift, carried it up and dumped it onto the beach.

He repeated this method until he had quite a pile of the shiny gold on the hard sand.

During one of the intervals while Will was below in the galleon's cabin refilling his basket, Zaidee came out on the schooner's deck and took her customary morning survey about.

Of course, she noticed at once that the vessel had changed

her position, and was further from the shore than she had been heretofore, and that fact told her that the Effie Dean was afloat once more.

"Ain't I glad!" she cried, looking over the side into the shining, transparent water. "There's nothing to hinder us from leaving this key just as soon as we get the rest of the treasure on board."

Looking toward the beach she spied Will coming into view with his basket load of glittering coin which he dumped on the growing pile close by.

Then without glancing at the vessel, he turned around and dived once more into the opening leading to the interior of the wreck.

"Will isn't losing any time, I see," she said to herself.

At that moment she happened to look toward the grove of plantain trees.

"My gracious! What's that?" she exclaimed.

Her gaze rested on the mast and rigging of a small vessel that must have come there some time during the night and dropped anchor.

She immediately called Zeb's attention to the strange craft.

"Golly!" cried the negro. "When dem fellers see all dat money yonder I 'spect dere's gwine ter be trubble. I'd better wade ashore and tole dat boy what's in de wind, don' yo' t'ink, Miss Zaidee?"

"I'll go myself," said the girl, resolutely.

"Ef yo' is bent on gwine dere's de boat 'longside dat yo' kin take, but yo' oughter carry one ob dem guns wid yo', and fotch anudder one up for me ter help skeer dem strangers off wid ef dey should happen to make demselves disagreeable."

The hint was not lost on Zaidee.

She ran into the cabin, got her father's rifle and pistol, and a shotgun also, which she handed to Zeb, and then quickly descending to the boat rowed to the beach.

When she reached the wreck Will was coming up with another load of coin.

"Will," she exclaimed, excitedly, as she dropped the rifle near the pile of money, "I'm afraid we're going to have trouble."

"Trouble!" he replied, surprised at her agitated manner and the sight of the revolver in her hand. "What do you mean?"

"A small vessel has put in on the other side of that ridge, behind the plantain trees, and there's every chance that we'll have visitors. When they catch sight of this money I'm afraid they'll want a finger in the pie. That's why I'm here, and I brought father's rifle for you to use if necessary."

At that moment they were startled by the report of a gun close by.

Then came a crashing sound among the bushes and a boy of fifteen, followed by two burly negroes, burst into sight and came running toward the wreck.

CHAPTER XV.

PASQUAL MARTINEZ TURNS UP AGAIN.

Will dropped the basket of loose coin, snatched up the rifle and stood on the defensive, while Zaidee courageously backed him up with her revolver.

The fleeing lad had a shotgun in his hand, and one of his pursuers was similarly armed.

The two negroes stopped in surprise when they saw Will Newton and Zaidee Cobb, but the boy, whose face was the picture of terror, kept right on until he reached the wreck, when he threw himself on his knees before Will and begged him to save him.

"What's the trouble?" asked Will, keeping one eye on the negroes, who appeared to be undecided what to do.

"They want to catch me and carry me back to the sloop," replied the lad.

"What sloop is it?"

"The Zingari, from Santiago."

"What is she doing at this key?"

"I don't know. We anchored on the other side of the island early this morning."

"Who's aboard of her beside those two negroes?"

"A Spaniard named Pasqual Martinez."

"Who?" cried Will, aghast.

"Pasqual Martinez."

"Great Scott! To think that rascal has discovered the treasure island at last," muttered Will, very much disturbed. "I wonder how he did it? I see lots of trouble ahead. What's your name?" he added aloud to the boy.

"Malcolm Merry."

"How came you to be aboard the sloop, and why are you running away from her?"

"Martinez carried me off from San Nicholas, Hayti. I came from England on my uncle's yacht Highflyer, and we had just put in at San Nicholas. My uncle had some business to transact there. I met Martinez on the mole, and we got talking together. He asked me if I'd like to go and see his sloop which was lying outside our yacht. I agreed to go, and we stepped into a boat and was rowed alongside. He took me into the little stuffy cabin and treated me to some cake and lemonade. The next thing I knew it was next morning and we were at sea. I started to raise a racket when Martinez told me if I didn't shut up he'd throw me overboard. Then I asked him why he had carried me off. He said he wanted me to wait on him aboard the sloop, and help him out on some scheme he was engaged in, the nature of which he wouldn't tell me. I couldn't help myself and had to obey him. Last night he got full of wine, and began talking about some buried treasure. Then he began to abuse me, kicked me about the cabin and finally threw me out on deck. I determined to run away at the first land we struck. A little while ago I saw my chance. I took a gun I saw in the cabin and started ashore. The darkies saw me and gave chase. One of them had a gun and fired at me. That's the whole story."

While the boy was talking the two negroes turned back and disappeared over the ridge.

"I know that Martinez to be a big rascal," said Will. "He came here to hunt for a buried treasure, but I've got ahead of him and propose to carry it away."

Merry's eyes now lighted on the heap of gold coin and they nearly started from his head.

"Is that real money?" he asked, in a tone of astonishment.

"That's what it is."

"Where did you find it?"

"In this old wreck. Now, Merry, I'm going to stand by you so that Martinez shan't touch you any more. In return I shall expect you to help us beat him and his negroes off."

"I'll do it," replied the boy. "That's your schooner, isn't it?" he continued, pointing at the Effie Dean.

"Yes. Now, we four—you, I, the negro aboard the schooner and Miss Zaidee here, are all armed, and ought to be able to handle the Spaniard and his negroes if they try to disturb us."

"They've only got that one gun, though Martinez may have a revolver," said the English boy.

When the pile of coin he had dumped on the sand had been removed to the Effie Dean, he noticed that Zaidee was making signs for him to return.

"You'd better get something to eat now," she said, when he drew near. "We can go on with the work afterward."

Will concluded that they could work better on a full stomach than an empty one, so he agreed to her suggestion and returned with her to the schooner.

When the three had eaten as much as they wanted, Will told Zeb to hasten his own breakfast, wait on Captain Cobb and then get ready to receive the gold as fast as it was sent out to the schooner.

Will, Zaidee and Merry then returned to the beach with the guns.

Will was in the wreck, loading up the basket, when he heard Zaidee's voice calling to him, and he ran up at once.

"They're watching us from the ridge," said the girl.

Will looked and saw Martinez and his two negroes standing among the plantain trees gazing at them.

Finally, Martinez motioned one of his men toward the trees, and then he and the other stepped into the boat and went off to the sloop.

"It's clear that chap has been set to watch our movements. I'll just lay for him, give him a clip on the head and drop him down into the pirates' cave."

The negro advanced among the trees without the least suspicion that he was walking into a trap, and selecting a spot where he could overlook the wreck without being seen, he sat down.

Will came up behind him and a single sweep with the butt of his rifle stretched him out unconscious.

Then he dragged him into the center of the grove, let him down easy into the hole, pulled up the ladder and put the hatch cover on.

"He's safe for awhile, I guess," muttered the boy, grimly.

Will concluded that the Spaniard would not make any move for awhile at least so he returned to the others and work was resumed getting out the rest of the gold.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE RICHEST BOY IN THE WORLD.

Zeb was called on shore to hasten matters, and a box was brought into play to hurry the gold up, Merry going down with Will into the cabin of the wreck.

In this way they made rapid progress during the next hour.

Then Will marched over to the plantain grove just in time to see the Spaniard and the negro start for the shore.

He hid among the bushes and heard Martinez call in vain for the man he had left on watch.

Then they hunted for him, but it is needless to say they couldn't find him.

At length they found their way to the center of the grove, and saw the ladder and the hatch cover.

Naturally, they turned the cover over to see what was under it and found the hole.

Looking down into it Martinez recognized the insensible form of the man he was hunting for.

Between them, with the aid of the ladder, they got him out, and then the Spaniard uttered a few more oaths, and expressed his astonishment at the condition and predicament he had found the man in.

They carried him down to the beach and tried to revive him by throwing water in his face, but it did no good, so they took him out to the sloop.

Will returned to his friends, who were awaiting his return on the beach.

"I reckon dat we better cover up dat entrance to de cabin and let dem pussons find it for demselves. What yo' t'ink, boss?" said Zeb.

Will had already meant to do that when they were ready to leave the key, so, sending Merry over to the grove to see what the Spaniard was doing, he and Zeb took hold of the shovels and closing the cabin door began to return the sand they had removed.

Before they had made much progress they saw Merry running back and stopped to hear what he had to say.

"Martinez and his two men are rowing around into the cove," said Merry, excitedly. "They look as if they were bent on a scrap with us."

Will dropped his shovel.

"We must get aboard the schooner at once," he said, "and be prepared to give them a warm reception if they start to make trouble for us."

They made at once for the schooner.

"Keep off!" shouted Will as the other boat drew near.

They paid no attention to this command.

"What do you want?" demanded the young American, covering Martinez with his rifle.

"I want half the treasure you've taken from this key," he replied, insolently, as the boat dashed up.

"Well, you've got a nerve. We don't want you on the schooner, and if you persist in trying to get aboard somebody is going to get hurt."

"Are you going to divide?" said the Spaniard.

"Certainly not."

"Then we'll take it all and set you adrift in our sloop," roared Martinez.

Will saw there was no use talking further.

The Spaniard, backed by his two burly negroes, meant to try and carry the schooner by boarding.

On an even footing they were more than a match for those aboard the *Effie Dean*.

Will realized that fact, so he fired at Martinez, intending only to wound him.

The Spaniard, who was watching for something of this kind, threw himself forward and escaped the ball, then he drew a revolver and discharged it at the boy.

The bullet clipped a curl from Will's head.

Zeb fired his shotgun at the foremost darkey in the boat and slightly wounded him.

The boat, however, touched the side of the schooner at that moment and Martinez and the other negro both made a leap for the vessel's deck.

Will made a swing at him with the butt of the rifle, and the Spaniard in trying to dodge lost his hold and fell into the water.

Suddenly something long and white darted through the water like a flash.

Martinez uttered a blood-curdling shriek as the shark caught him between his ponderous jaws and dragged him under, leaving a trail of blood behind to mark the fate which had overtaken the rascally Spaniard.

The negro who was holding on to the bulwark begged for mercy, but Will would not let him aboard, and the fellow had to hang there till his wounded associate worked the boat close enough for him to drop into her.

Then they rowed away from the schooner as fast as they could.

Will and Zeb returned to the wreck and filled up the excavation they had made.

When they returned on board the sails were hoisted and the schooner, under a stiff breeze, started for Key West, where she arrived in due time.

Before she had discharged the freight she had brought over from Santiago for that port, Captain Cobb was able to be about again.

He had heard all about the treasure, and was prepared to help Will get it to New York.

The *Effie Dean* reached New York ten days later and Will had the stuff removed to a big safe deposit vault.

He disposed of a part of the silver bars right away, out of the proceeds of which he gave Malcolm Merry \$1,000 and a first-class ticket to Liverpool; Zeb, the cook, \$5,000; and Captain Obediah Cobb, \$50,000.

To Zaidée he presented gems easily worth \$100,000.

Then he started for New Jersey and his old home.

He found his mother alive, but in deep mourning for her

second husband, Mr. Bacon, who had died unexpectedly a month previous.

Will was welcomed back as one from the dead.

He learned that three months after his disappearance Mr. Bacon circulated the report that his stepson had run away in the *Lone Star* and had met his death on the coast of Cuba.

Dick Bumstead, his old chum, was away at Yale College, and Will didn't meet him until later.

To his mother alone, under the promise of the strictest secrecy, he told the story of the island treasure trove which he had recovered.

Shortly afterward, in company with Captain Cobb and Zaidée, Will arranged to revisit the treasure key in order to search for and recover the many million dollars' worth of silver bars he believed the three wrecked galleons held.

For this purpose he chartered a fine big schooner, hired a select crew, and provided suitable machinery to make quick and effective work of the job.

Nothing had been disturbed since the *Effie Dean* left the key, and work was first begun on the Spanish wreck which had contained the treasure chest.

All of 500 tons of silver bars were found in her hold.

The other wrecks were, after some considerable trouble, located and a similar amount of silver found in the hold of each.

The schooner then sailed for New York, where Will disposed of his cargo, partly to the government and partly to large manufacturers of solid silver goods.

The most valuable gems in his collection he made no effort to dispose of.

They are to-day stored in the private steel vaults of his New Jersey home, a palatial structure erected on the site of the old family residence.

A very charming young matron, whom Will addresses as Zaidée, reigns as mistress of this splendid home, which is the wonder of the neighborhood, and its magnificence has earned for its owner the title of **THE YOUNG MONTE CRISTO**.

THE END.

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